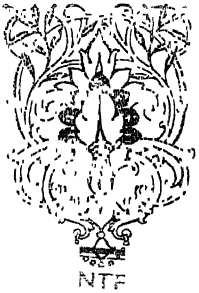
SHELLEY & HIS POETRY

BY

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LONDON: GEORGE G.
HARRAP & COMPANY
9 PORTSMOUTH STREET
KINGSWAY W.C. MCMXII

PRINTED BY
BALLANTYNE & COMPANY LTD
AT THE BALLANTYNE PRESS
TAVISTOCK STREET COVENT GARDEN
LONDON

GENERAL PREFACE

A GLANCE through the pages of this little book will suffice to disclose the general plan of the series of which it forms a part. Only a few words of explanation, therefore, will be necessary.

The point of departure is the undeniable fact that with the vast majority of young students of literature a living interest in the work of any poet can best be aroused, and an intelligent appreciation of it secured, when it is immediately associated with the character and career of the poet himself. The cases are indeed few and far between in which much fresh light will not be thrown upon a poem by some knowledge of the personality of the writer, while it will often be found that the most direct—perhaps even the only—way to the heart of its meaning lies through a consideration of the circumstances in which it had its birth. The purely æsthetic critic may possibly object that a poem should be regarded simply as a self-contained and detached piece of art, having no personal affiliations or bearings. Of the validity of this as an abstract principle nothing need now be said. The fact remains that, in the earlier stages of study at any rate, poetry is most valued and loved when it is made to seem most human and vital; and the human and vital interest of poetry can be most surely brought home to the reader by the biographical method of interpretation.

This is to some extent recognised by writers of histories and text-books of literature, and by editors of selections from the works of our poets; for place is always given by them to a certain amount of biographical material. But in the histories and text-books the biography of a given writer stands by itself, and his work has to be sought elsewhere, the student being left to make the connection for himself; while even in our current editions of selections there is little systematic attempt to link biography, step by step, with production.

This brings us at once to the chief purpose of the present series. In this, biography and production will be considered together and in intimate association. In other words, an endeavour will be made to interest the reader in the lives and personalities of the poets dealt with, and at the same time to use biography as an introduction and key to their writings.

Each volume will therefore contain the life-story of the poet who forms its subject. In this, attention will be specially directed to his personality as it expressed itself in his poetry, and to the influences and conditions which counted most as formative factors in the growth of his genius. This biographical study will be used as a setting for a selection, as large as space will permit, of his representative poems. Such poems, where possible, will be reproduced in full, and care will be taken to bring out their connection with his character, his circumstances, and the movement of his mind. Then, in

addition, so much more general literary criticism will be incorporated as may seem to be needed to supplement the biographical material, and to exhibit both the essential qualities and the historical importance of his work.

It is believed that the plan thus pursued is substantially in the nature of a new departure, and that the volumes of this series, constituting as they will an introduction to the study of some of our greatest poets, will be found useful to teachers and students of literature, and no less to the general lover of English poetry.

WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON

POEMS QUOTED IN WHOLE OR IN PART

	PAGE
Prince Athanase	12
Hymn to Intellectual Beauty	15, 64
The Revolt of Islam	20, 74
Letter to Maria Gisborne	21, 31
To Coleridge	33
To Harriet	36
Queen Mab	48
Evening : To Harriet	51
At Bracknell : Stanzas	52
A Summer Evening Churchyard	60
Alastor	62, 63
Passage of the Apennines	78
Julian and Maddalo	79
Lines written among the Euganean Hills	81
Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples	87
Lines to an Indian Air	89
Prometheus Unbound	92, 93, 97
The Cenci	101
The Masque of Anarchy	104
Ode to the West Wind	107

POEMS QUOTED

	PAGE
The Cloud	112
The Sensitive Plant	115
Epipsychidion	119
"One word is too often profaned"	120
To Night	121
Adonais	128
Hellas	135
"O World! O Life! O Time!"	141

SHELLEY AND HIS POETRY

OF none of our English poets can it be more truly written that his life and his work are at one than of Percy Bysshe Shelley. If we write the story of the one, we find it to contain all that is essential of the other. More than any other great poet, Shelley lived his poetry; if it was wild, passionate, defiant, utterly unpractical—so was he; if it was full of generous enthusiasms and exquisite dreams—so was he too. Theories, speculations, fancies, visions, fall headlong in melodious confusion through his poems: they formed equally the driving impulses of his practical everyday life. His "sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought," just because his spirit was ever haunted by the tragedies and the tyrannies, the hideousness and the hate, which disfigured the beautiful world of his dreams. He was "a beautiful and ineffectual angel," according to Matthew Arnold's sentence, "beating in the void his luminous wings in vain"; and his poetry is one long cry for freedom, a torrent of pleading song. Brave, sincere, tender; acutely sensitive to all that is lovely in sight or in sound; a "blithe spirit" surmounting, in ecstatic song the clouds of prejudice and evil:—himself and his verse are these, and are at one. Such

characters as he draws in his poems are but ghosts of himself! We see him assuredly in the Laon of "The Revolt of Islam"; and here are a few lines from a fragmentary poem of 1817, "Prince Athanase," in which the poet is unconsciously delineating himself, though it is but a vignette in this case:

Fearless he was, and scorning all disguise,
What he dared do or think, though men might start,
He spoke with mild, yet unaverted eyes;

Liberal he was of soul, and frank of heart,
And to his many friends,—all loved him well—
Whate'er he knew or felt he would impart,

If words he found those inmost thoughts to tell;
If not, he smiled or wept; and his weak foes
He neither spurned nor hated,—though with fell

And mortal hate their thousand voices rose,
They passed like aimless arrows from his ear—
Nor did his heart or mind its portal close

To those or them, or any whom life's sphere
May comprehend within its wide array.
What sadness made that vernal spirit sere?

He knew not. Though his life day after day
Was failing like an unreplenished stream;
Though in his eyes a cloud and burthen lay,

Through which his soul, like Vesper's serene beam
Piercing the chasms of ever-rising clouds,
Shone, softly burning; though his lips did seem

Like reeds which quiver in impetuous floods ;
And through his sleep, and o'er each waking hour,
Thoughts after thoughts, unresting multitudes,

Were driven within him, by some secret power,
Which bade them blaze, and live, and roll afar,
Like lights and sounds, from haunted tower to tower

O'er castled mountains borne, when tempest's war
Is levied by the night-contending winds,
And the pale dalesmen watch with eager ear ;—

Though such were in his spirit, as the fiends
Which wake and feed an ever-living woe,—
What was this grief, which ne'er in other minds

A mirror found,—he knew not—none could know.

Here, as in many other passages of skilful verse, characteristically veiled by rolling clouds of metaphor and simile, the poet himself has brought his own spirit.

The early surroundings of the poet, who was thus haunted through his life by a poignant and unalleviated grief, were not such as to nourish the "divine discontent." In the narrow sense of the term he was fortunate in his origin. His father—and he himself afterwards—was the heir to a baronetcy and to considerable wealth. He could have indulged to the fullest degree the average Englishman's tastes—ridden to hounds, sat at Quarter Sessions, entered Parliament, and lorded it benevolently over an obsequious tenantry. This was congenial enough

to the father, who simply never understood or sympathised with his gifted and eccentric son. Even in early years they were estranged ; and in later life the poet never felt for his father any emotion but that of an intolerable aversion, amounting almost to a passionate hate. He was probably unjust in this ; his father's ideas seemed to him sordid and degrading to the spirit ; but they were those of a kindly, if insensitive, man of the world, who could not help ascribing his son's unconventional conduct and eccentric beliefs to wantonness or insanity. Although, therefore, Shelley was born to the substantial comfort of squiredom, there was no influence at work in his early years to direct or to tame his unique genius. His mother seems to have had a little more intellect, but no more culture or sympathy with him, than his father had. His grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, who lived till 1815, was in his opinion a " bad man," a " curse to society," a " hard-hearted reprobate." The immovable obstacle, against which his beautiful spirit hurled itself so often in vain, was simply the moral and intellectual inertia of prosaic men, like those who could not mould his childhood or give practical direction to his youth.

He was born at Field Place, a pleasant home near Horsham in the county of Sussex, on August 4, 1792. There is no reason to read into his early childhood any real unhappiness. He was the eldest of the family, and had five sisters and one brother. With his sisters, and especially

Hellen, he lived in happy sympathy until he left home. He was allowed to do very much what he would ; but from the first he had no taste for sports of any kind, although he became quite proficient with a pistol. He was romantic in every nerve, and invented wonderful stories for the delight of his admiring sisters. He wrote verses with precocious fluency at the age of eight, and acquired before he went to school an interest in chemical and electrical experiments. He loved to ramble in the fields and lanes, dreaming, spinning his unimaginable romances ; but apart from this his inclinations were centred in his reading. The following stanzas from the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" doubtless recall the premature musings of these early years :

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave, and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed ;
I was not heard—I saw them not—
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming,—
Sudden thy shadow fell on me :
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy !

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine : have I not kept the vow ?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave : they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night :
They know that never joy illumed my brow,
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou, O awful Loveliness,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express !

The boy who was thus early fascinated by ghosts, and who had fed his mind upon the melodramatic marvels of the popular romances of his day, was sent away to school when he was ten years of age to receive the rough-and-ready discipline of a public-school education. He went first to Sion House, Isleworth, apparently an academy for middle-class children, kept by a Dr. Greenlaw. He lived there amid uncongenial companions a life of isolation which was only too faithful a forewarning of his future. In his appearance and manners, no less than in his habits and tastes, he was a solitary. He had almost a girl's delicacy of feeling and gentleness of expression. With an abundance of rich brown hair ; with large, dreamy blue eyes ; with a tall but slender bodily frame, and a ruddy, yet thoughtful face ; he was from his boyhood to his death a striking, even handsome person. Strangely it is recorded

of him, the most melodious of our poets, that his voice, especially when he was in any way excited, was harsh and strident; otherwise, even as a boy, he was distinguished for his sweet courtesy and unfailing sympathy. He required, in his schooldays as in his manhood, a tale of tyranny or oppression to set him aflame, and then the horror and indignation which he felt would fill his countenance with every sign of pain. Thus we must picture him at the age of thirteen: a quick learner, a voracious reader, a friend of the helpless and the persecuted; a boy of unquenchable and eccentric individuality; one capable of intense loves and hates, yet withal of strong and quick moral sensibility; no mere unsocial recluse, yet unmoved by the trivial politics that excited the little world he lived in; happiest when sequestered with one of his favourite novels in some lonely nook, or when, in an ecstasy of reverie, he watched the myriad forms of cloud and listened to the melody of the winds. And these same words would serve to describe him throughout his life. He grew in power, until he could capture cloud and wind and every aspect of beautiful nature in imperishable song; but he never lost his boyish enthusiasms, his pure childlike visions; a creature of the spirit, impatient of the ephemeral quests of men, he was at school and to the end.

At Eton, to which he was sent in 1805, Shelley was the same boy. It is assumed that he was unhappy in the great public school, but the evidence that is available suggests that this was

not entirely the case. There were, doubtless, a few boys of studious habits with whom the keen scholar could exercise his early philosophic proclivities ; and there was certainly one tutor, Dr. Lind, who was keen enough to diagnose Shelley's extraordinary gifts justly, and sympathetic enough to win his highest respect. He appears as the hermit in "The Revolt of Islam," and again in "Prince Athanase," with every mark of the poet's enthusiastic reverence upon his character. But Shelley was too impatient of discipline and restraint, had interests of his own too peremptory, for us to doubt that he was frequently in conflict with the official routine of the school. The small essentials of life were to him mean and petrifying ; the interests of his companions were vulgar ; and the whole system, aiming as it did at the suppression of the individual to an oppressive authority, was for him the embodiment of a ruthless tyranny, against which he must throw the whole strength of his spirit. And if he rebelled against the system, he was equally a rebel against the studies prescribed by it. While he organised a strike against fagging, he translated Pliny or wrote romances when he ought to have been adjusting the false quantities and solecisms of his Latin verses. Throughout his life he was in this way unable to perceive the importance of material details ; and both schoolmasters and schoolboys are in their different ways impatient with those who do not measure them by their own standards. Shelley himself

was easily won by love, but only rendered more defiant by the rod ; his pedagogues had not this necessary insight into his character ; but, on the other hand, Shelley was blind to the fact that all boys were not as he was. In this respect Eton was a microcosm like the great world in which he was later to play his part : he could not make the best of it as it was, but persisted in testing it by a transcendental standard of his own imagining.

With all this, however, Shelley came away from Eton with a well-stored mind. He was an ardent student, as well as a voracious reader ; his poetry shows us that, whatever may have been the limitations of his scholarship in the narrow sense, he had a wide knowledge of the Greek and Latin authors, a knowledge which he could use with excellent effects upon his verse ; while his scientific studies led him on to the problems of metaphysics and, later, into a loving study of Plato, of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. He had the gift of rapid assimilation, a two-edged gift responsible at once for much of the vagueness and for much of the comprehensive grasp of philosophical principles which characterise his writings. He wrote poems early and with facility, but without betraying the germs of his genius : most of his boyhood verses have been lost. During his last year at Eton he published a fantastic and impossible romance called "Zastrozzi," an imbroglio of passionate absurdities culled from his much-admired Mrs. Radcliffe. The book has none of the cleverness

of its models ; it is merely a maze of meaningless words ; and our only interest in it arises from the fact that Shelley obtained £40 for it, and spent the money upon a schoolboy banquet to some of his Etonian friends. A further romance, entitled " St. Irvyne," belongs to the same year, 1810, but is no more worthy of attention. A volume of verse, " Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire "—partly not original, by the way—was also printed ; but only a few copies were issued, and only one of these has been recovered. It would be unprofitable, and at the same time unfair to Shelley's fame, to give specimens of his boyish work ; but two passages from later poems throw pleasant light upon the hopes and hobbies of his early years.

The first extract, from " The Revolt of Islam " (1818), obviously refers to his schooldays :

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM : DEDICATION

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep : a fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why ; until there rose
From the near schoolroom, voices, that, alas !
Were but one echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

And then I clasped my hands and looked around—
—But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,

Which poured their warm drops on the sunny
ground—
So, without shame, I spake :—" I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check." I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and
bold.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linkèd armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind ;
Thus power and hope were strengthened more
and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

The following passage comes from the " Letter to Maria Gisborne " (1820), a pleasant familiar poem written from Leghorn to a lady friend who had treated him well in Italy. He describes himself amid a chaos of scientific instruments and books ; the result is a very delightful interplay of science and fancy.

LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE

Upon the table
More knacks and quips there be than I am able
To catalogise in this verse of mine :—
A pretty bowl of wood—not full of wine,

But quicksilver ; that dew which the gnomes drink
When at their subterranean toil they swink,
Pledging the demons of the earthquake, who
Reply to them in lava—cry halloo !
And call out to the cities o'er their head,—
Roofs, towers, and shrines, the dying and the dead,
Crash through the chinks of earth—and then all quaff
Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
This quicksilver no gnome has drunk—within
The walnut bowl it lies, veinèd and thin,
In colour like the wake of light that stains
The Tuscan deep, when from the moist moon rains
The inmost shower of its white fire—the breeze
Is still—blue Heaven smiles over the pale seas.
And in this bowl of quicksilver—for I
Yield to the impulse of an infancy
Outlasting manhood—I have made to float
A rude idealism of a paper boat :—
A hollow screw with cogs—Henry will know
The thing I mean and laugh at me,—if so
He fears not I should do more mischief.—Next
Lie bills and calculations much perplext,
With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint
Traced over them in blue and yellow paint.
Then comes a range of mathematical
Instruments, for plans nautical and statical ;
A heap of rosin, a queer broken glass
With ink in it ;—a china cup that was
What it will never be again, I think,—
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
The liquor doctors rail at—and which I
Will quaff in spite of them—and when we die
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,
And cry out,—" Heads or tails ? " where'er we be,

Near that a dusty paint-box, some odd hooks,
A half-burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
Where conic sections, spherics, logarithms,
To great Laplace, from Saunderson and Sims,
Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
Of figures,—disentangle them who may.
Baron de Tott's Memoirs beside them lie,
And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
Near those a most inexplicable thing,
With lead in the middle—I'm conjecturing
How to make Henry understand ; but no—
I'll leave, as Spenser says, with many mo,
This secret in the pregnant womb of time,
Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.

II

WHEN Shelley went to Oxford in the autumn of 1810, his character, and many of his opinions, were fully formed ; and his short career at the university brought both to a crisis. He had already become a perplexity, not to say an anxiety, to his friends. The misunderstanding between him and his father was by this time irremediable. Once during his life at Eton Shelley had been ill, and during his delirium conceived the notion that his father was contemplating his confinement in a lunatic asylum. Whether this was so or not, Shelley believed that he was only saved by a timely intervention of Dr. Lind. The delusion, if such it was, was as real to Shelley's vivid imagination as positive fact, and coloured all his subsequent views of

his father with the dismal dye of tyranny and cruelty. Nevertheless, he allowed himself to be sent to Oxford, where his father fondly hoped, no doubt, to see him smoothed into sanity by wider experience of the world.

But before his first year was complete, the future poet had been ignominiously expelled from the university ; and his family, regarding him now as a hopeless case, could only watch his impetuous drift into courses and opinions which seemed to them—what they seemed also to the Oxford dons—to be entirely beyond the pale of decency. A full account of the poet's Oxford life, as brilliant and fascinating as a novel, is to be found in the " Life " by Thomas Jefferson Hogg; a true, if candid and occasionally uncertain, friend of his. Hogg and Shelley met first at dinner in the hall of University College ; and the two enthusiasts fell into an ardent debate upon the merits of modern German and Italian literature. The excited discussion was continued in Hogg's rooms afterwards, until Shelley suddenly confessed his ignorance of the whole subject, dismissed it as unimportant trifling, and grew eloquent over the glories of scientific investigation. Next day Hogg called upon the investigator in his rooms, and saw what he has described with a dry but kindly humour—a room, newly papered, carpeted and furnished, already in the grip of aboriginal chaos : books and boots, eating utensils and chemical apparatus, money and acids, electrical machines and pistols, phials,

flasks, mathematical instruments, microscope, air-pump—all in a most turbulent confusion; holes burned in the new carpet, stains disfiguring a handsome table, aqua regia dissolving gold in a tea-cup, an evil-smelling liquid distilling its fumes into the air, and Shelley apparently oblivious of anything unusual. Hogg did not perceive the attractions of such a science as this, found the electricity and the odours uninspiring, and preferred to admire his friend's eloquent excursions from the midst of his experiments into poetry or philosophy. Hogg had not Shelley's genius for the transcendental, nor his delicacy of moral perception; he was practical, and had nothing of the fanatic in his composition; but he was a genuine admirer of the most generous, most sensitive and most aspiring man of his time. He discerned the poet's splendid gifts of soul and of intellect. He tells us how acute the poet's thinking faculties were, how fine his sensibilities; through him we know how the foundations of Shelley's later ideas were laid, and how it was a matter of principle with him to ignore the details of life—its common joys and everyday incidents—in his search for wide-sweeping and universal ideas. Hogg was able to pierce the unconventional and eccentric cloak that obscured the fair form of a most beautiful individuality; he has shown us the poet as his delighted readers would know him. We do not apologise for giving, therefore, the following short extract from Hogg's most interesting pages:

"As I felt, in truth, but a slight interest in the subject of his conversation [i.e. chemistry], I had leisure to examine and, I may add, to admire the appearance of my extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but stooped so much that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day, but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate and almost feminine, of the purest red and white; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having spent the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were, in fact, unusually small; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hand, or passed his fingers through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. . . . His features were not symmetrical (the mouth, perhaps, excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral

expression less beautiful than the intellectual; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration that characterises the best works of the great masters of Florence and of Rome."

Many stories could be told in illustration of the unusual character of the poet—of his wonderful spurts of energy and his equally strange lethargic fits; of his eccentric habits of eating and of sleep; of his genuine kindness in all cases of suffering; of his utter intolerance of the faintest odour of oppression; of every phase of his nature, in short, which struck the imaginative with awe and tickled the foolish into contempt or hate. He seems to have loved his life at Oxford, though he despised the dons and their pedantries. But the fatal germ was already in his system. Even at Eton he had been conspicuous for his religious heterodoxy; and his reading in the writers of the eighteenth century had fallen in with the natural bias of his mind against what was conventional or customary. He had shocked the correspondents of his school-days with his free and (to them) irreverent criticisms of orthodox Christianity; he seemed to see in it an instrument of oppression upon the spirit of mankind, making fetters for its thought and putting lead upon the wheels of progress; from an attitude of indifferentism he passed very rapidly through the half-way house of deism into the full hostility of atheism.

He was in this frame of mind during his short Oxford career.

Hogg seems to have held similar views, but to have been more circumspect about expressing them. With Shelley, however, to believe was to act. He professed and practised a large tolerance of all religious beliefs ; but he was by no means content to hold any sort of principle without seeking, by argument, example or eloquence, to make others share it with him. Faith was, for him, the vital impulse of conduct · and, his faith being uncommon, he had already begun to pay the penalty of his advocacy. During the Christmas vacation, he wrote often to Hogg in a dismal tone, complaining bitterly of the dangers which surrounded him, of the intolerance and lack of sympathy shown towards him by his parents. "My mother fancies I want to make a deistical coterie of my little sisters," he says. He has tried to argue the matter with his father, but the result is hopeless. He cannot enjoy Christmas under such surroundings : he is "wretched to the last degree." During his Eton days he had fallen in love with a beautiful cousin, Harriet Grove ; but she has married one of the insensible species, and she will become as one of them ! This disaster was the direct consequence of his atheistical opinions. Miss Grove accepted the mild heresies of his boyish love-letters as the flippant spice which enlivened them for her ; but, finding them not only real but growing ranker, both she and her parents took fright, and the engage-

ment was never completed. It was a double blow to Shelley : not only did he love Miss Grove with a romantic, boyish sincerity, but already love had become for him a transcendental ideal, the quintessence of human perfection ; and in the weakness of Harriet Grove he read (but did not understand) a dismaying contradiction of his purest dream. His spirit had thus suffered much from its heresies, but it only became more defiant on that account—more determined to continue the battle against intolerance to the end.

He had fallen at Eton into the habit of corresponding with men or women unknown to him, trying to engage them in discussion of the points that interested him. In order to aid himself in this rather unusual proceeding, he drew up into the form of a pamphlet a series of propositions and arguments, which he entitled "The Necessity of Atheism." This very short tract, whose material was mainly taken from the deists and sceptics of the eighteenth century, fell into the hands of the Master of University College. The result was Shelley's peremptory expulsion from the college. Hogg, generously intervening on behalf of his friend, received the same summary treatment. To both the blow was severe ; but neither thought of submission or apology, and they promptly left Oxford on the day following the sentence. The high-handed proceeding was an emphatic disaster to Shelley. It merely hardened his mind into opinions still more extreme. It

exaggerated still further the intense feeling of intolerance and oppression which already loomed too large in his view of the world. On this account the dons must certainly be blamed; and moreover, they never attempted to reason with Shelley, but acted in a panic fear of revolutionary ideas, which the course of European events had done much to foster. Yet atheism, though not urged by Shelley as the final word on religion, was certainly not in keeping with the Church of England professions which were at that time extorted from members of the university; and public opinion, both inside and outside Oxford, would doubtless have supported the prompt suppression of the dangerous doctrines. Timothy Shelley was certainly not surprised, and regarded his son's punishment as natural and fitting. He sent his son letters of reprimand and of protest, and would not permit him to return to Field Place unless he recanted his opinions and agreed to place himself under the care of a suitable tutor. He was also to break with Hogg; but this was naturally the last thing that Shelley would do. In his excited bewilderment the well-meaning father consulted his solicitors, wrote sympathetic letters to Mr. Hogg senior, and determined to put his son through a course of Paley's "Evidences" for the correction of his offensive beliefs. But all this was of no avail with Shelley, who was smarting under a sense of the most violent injustice and had been so suddenly cut off from a life that was beginning to open out so attractively.

Consequently he did not go to Field Place, but took lodgings with Hogg in Poland Street, London. Hogg left him in April 1811, in order to study law in York ; and for some time Shelley lived in his apartments alone. What this led to we shall presently see, but it is pertinent first to observe with what pleasure he might be supposed to have looked forward to his life in London. The passion of the preacher and the *œstrus* of the reformer were already hot in his spirit, and London was the proper spring-board for his large ideas. And further : great men lived there—men he knew not yet—men honoured like Leigh Hunt for their martyrdom, or like Coleridge and Godwin for their philosophy. To sit at the feet of such men as these was a hope which made some little solace for his Oxford disappointments. How he thought of them later we may read in the "Letter to Maria Gisborne," previously quoted. The poem was written from Italy in 1820 ; but we may insert here quite suitably the character-sketches of Coleridge, Hunt, and Hogg which are so admirable in themselves and full of the Shelleyan type of hero-worship :

LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE

You will see Coleridge—he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,

A hooded eagle among blinking owls.—
You will see Hunt—one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is—a tomb ;
Who is, what others seem ; his room no doubt
Is still adorned with many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about ;
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung ;
The gifts of the most learned among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law, and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door ;
Alas ! it is no use to say, " I'm poor ! "
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever read in book,
Except in Shakespeare's wisest tenderness.—
You will see Hogg,—and I cannot express
His virtues,—though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades the gate
Within which they inhabit ;—of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster shell,
One of the richest of the deep.

We have no worthy poetry from Shelley at this date. His mind had been largely recipient hitherto, but soon events were to put his knowledge and his emotions into feverish self-expression ; his enthusiasms and his disappointments were to find wings, and to dissolve themselves into showers of melody, like the skylark in the heavens. He was to be highly tried by both during the next three years. The

following poem, addressed to Coleridge whom he never met in person, is one of his earliest lyrics, and expresses his dominant mood about the end of his first experience of London in 1814 :

TO * * * * *

Oh ! there are spirits of the air,
And genii of the evening breeze,
And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
As star-beams among twilight trees :—
Such lovely ministers to meet
Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
And moonlit seas, that are the voice
Of these inexplicable things,
Thou didst hold commune, and rejoice
When they did answer thee ; but they
Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes
Beams that were never meant for thine,
Another's wealth :—tame sacrifice
To a fond faith ! still dost thou pine ?
Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands ?

Ah ! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
On the false earth's inconstancy ?
Did thine own mind afford no scope
Of love, or moving thoughts to thee ?
That natural scenes or human smiles
Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles ?

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled
Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted ;

The glory of the moon is dead ;
 Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed ;
Thine own soul still is true to thee,
But changed to a foul fiend through misery.

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
 Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,
Dream not to chase ;—the mad endeavour
 Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

III

IT is difficult to follow Shelley during the summer of 1811. He was evidently very restless and at the mercy of every caprice of his unfixed imagination. In this state he drifted into the critical event of his life. An arrangement had been made, through the medium of an uncle of his, by which Timothy Shelley allowed his son £200 a year and even received him at Field Place ; but, before that, Shelley had been in serious straits for money and dependent upon little advances from his sisters. They were at school at Wandsworth, and among their friends was a girl of sixteen named Harriet Westbrook. She was the daughter of a coffee-house keeper in Mount Street, and was distinctly handsome and attractive, with a pleasing disposition as well as a beautiful complexion and beautiful hair. Curiously enough, it is Hogg who is Harriet's most enthusiastic admirer ; Shelley himself was, before their

marriage at all events, certainly not in love with her. About June he visited his relatives, the Groves, at Rhyader, and the references to Harriet in his correspondence are quite conclusive: "If I know anything about love, I am *not* in love," he wrote to Hogg. Nevertheless he had seen much of Harriet, and to her terror had discussed his heterodox opinions with her He had become acquainted, too, with the Westbrook family, including Harriet's elder sister, Eliza. This lady seems to have fixed upon him as a most desirable match for Harriet from the first: the heir to a baronetcy was certainly a person to take her breath away, whatever his present straits might be. Harriet, too, soon outgrew her distaste for the handsome young man's religious views; she became discontented both at school and at home; she talked darkly of tyrannous ill-treatment, and in the end threw herself upon Shelley's protection. What could he do? He had advised her to resist her father: she had taken his advice, and was now in his arms. He was not deeply in love with her, but he sympathised with her in the (mainly imaginary) persecution which she suffered, and was flattered to be her support. He did not believe in the institution of marriage, yet he eloped with Harriet and married her at the earliest possible moment.

The marriage took place at Edinburgh and, though thus commenced under unpromising auspices, was for a time a complete success. Harriet was of a lively and easy temperament,

with a taste for serious reading—deficient, perhaps, in the finer feelings, but at this stage a real source of happiness to the poet. And for some little time they were highly tried by circumstances. Shelley's allowance ceased at this flagrant defiance of his father's most sensitive point of "honour"; and Harriet's father seems to have been no less wrathful. But both relented eventually, and the youthful Mr. and Mrs. Shelley found themselves the possessors of £400 a year. Certainly this was not much in view of Shelley's reckless innocence of the value of money. He was profuse in his expenditure on books, on travelling, and, at all times, on the relief of the suffering and the destitute. Still the ensuing two years were, perhaps, the happiest he ever knew. That he ever learned to love Harriet with the full passion of his heart we may well doubt; that he learned to value her, the following little poem suggests strongly: it is the dedication to "Queen Mab," which is his first notable poem, and the chief fruit of those happy years.

TO HARRIET * * * * *

DEDICATORY INTRODUCTION TO "QUEEN MAB"

Whose is the love that gleaming through the world,
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?
Whose is the warm and partial praise,
Virtue's most sweet reward?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow?

Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
And loved mankind the more ?

Harriet ! on thine :—thou wert my purer mind ;
Thou wert the inspiration of my song ;
Thine are these early wilding flowers,
Though garlanded by me.

Then press into thy breast this pledge of love ;
And know, though time may change and years may roll,
Each floweret gathered in my heart
It consecrates to thine.

Having grown tired of Edinburgh, the Shelleys went to York to be near Hogg. While staying there, Shelley attempted to make some sort of financial accommodation with his father ; but Timothy Shelley was anxious now to cut his eldest son out of his rights to the property on his death, and nothing came from the poet's appeals. While he was away, Harriet's sister, Eliza, became an inmate of their household, an unfortunate event in every way, for Eliza at once took upon herself the economy of the family and dominated the home completely. Hogg has left us a very uncomplimentary account of her, jaundiced, no doubt, by his personal dislike ; but evidently she wielded a baneful influence over her sister, who thought her infallible and immaculate. The sordid hand which she intruded into his wedded life grew heavier and more intolerable to Shelley, as it gradually weakened the bond which was uniting

his spirit to Harriet's. While he was absent also, he suspected Hogg himself of having become too friendly with Harriet. This may have been merely one of his delusions, though Hogg does not disguise his keen admiration : at any rate, Shelley took sudden flight from York, and presently we find him with Harriet and Eliza at Keswick.

This was an attractive spot for Shelley ; the romantic scenery—of mountain and waterfall, precipice and chasm—stirred his imagination, and was soon to produce a most abundant fruit in the splendid scenery of "Alastor," "Prometheus Unbound," and numberless other poems. But, more than this for the moment, there was the chance that he might come into the presence of the mighty "Lake poets" themselves. To his disappointment and misfortune he did not see Coleridge, and Wordsworth refused to give him his countenance. But he met Southey and seems to have talked much with him, finding him at first a charming man, but rapidly becoming impatient with his stubborn conservatism. For Shelley's political views had thus early concentrated themselves upon revolution and reform, and Southey was horror-stricken at both. In face of the terrible poverty and discontent that lay upon England, Shelley saw but the ruthless tyranny of armies, the dead inertia of repression, and the coarse revelries of the Regent. No less alive to the misery, Southey extolled the prince, taught the need of expediency in politics, and distrusted

all combined effort at social regeneration. Such counsel was a mere venom in the sensitive spirit of Shelley. *He* had no conventional respect for established systems, whether of government or of religion. But he had ideals which were becoming irritable for practical activity; and these ideals, ripened only by time and knowledge, were the impulses of all his noblest poems and of the rest of his intellectual life.

Dreams of literary projects flitted through the winter months at Keswick, and some of them were chased with ardent zeal. The passion for "reforming the world" possessed him henceforth in unabated intensity. He would recall mankind back to its golden age, wherein manners should be again simple and pure; whence all pomps and luxuries, inequalities and slaveries, should be eliminated; and where the spirit of eternal Love should for ever reign in the hearts of men. This happy future was to be foretold in a poem, of which "Queen Mab" was soon to be the first embodiment. We read much about his hopes and plans in the interesting correspondence which Shelley carried on with a schoolmistress named Eliza Hitchener during these months. Miss Hitchener seems to have been a woman of acute intelligence and independent views, for whom Shelley, with but the slightest knowledge of her, conceived a very ardent admiration. She became the incarnate spirit of his ideals. She shared his taste for metaphysics, and he discussed with her in his

letters whatever project or fancy was in his mind. He found in her, as he thought, the perfect and intuitive sympathy of a kindred mind. She inspired him with a worship which was altogether independent of her sex; and it seemed to him that, whatever thoughts or visions entered his spirit, the credit was partly hers. But the perfect being, the ideal in the flesh, is not to be found on this earth; and when at length the long-desired visit from Miss Hitchener was paid to Shelley, it was also not long before the intellectual angel of the correspondence became the "brown demon" of real life. Shelley lived to comprehend the folly of his opinion of Miss Hitchener, but for the present he found in his ideal of her an inspiration to soaring thought and meditative rapture.

A much more important acquaintance also began to take shape now. William Godwin was a man of great reputation and some notoriety in his day, as the author of a pretentious book on political philosophy entitled "Political Justice." This book fell into Shelley's hands; and he found in it a cold, even dry, exposition of the rational basis of the very revolutionary ideas at which he himself had arrived. Never self-confident, Shelley was delighted to see in a treatise so unimpassioned, and apparently so philosophical, a justification for his own views. He felt that he had a strong intellectual support to lean upon, and when he learned that the sage of his idolatry was still living he was deeply excited. Noble spirits still walked the

earth! He must express his veneration, and pray for philosophical guidance; this he did with boyish ardour in a letter, of which the essence is here extracted: "The name of Godwin has been used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration. I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him. From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles, I have ardently desired to share on the footing of intimacy that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations. . . . I had enrolled your name among the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so. You still live, and I firmly believe are still planning the welfare of human kind. . . . The ill-treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles on my judgment. I am young: I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth . . . I shall earnestly await your answer."

To Shelley's great surprise, Godwin answered his epistle and drew from him two further letters of great interest as revealing the poet's inner self at this stage of his career. Godwin was cold, but not discouraging; he liked to pose as the practical and experienced philosopher, but he was evidently not insensitive to the vanity of discipleship. It was some time before the two men were to meet, and it was very long before disillusionment came to dethrone Godwin too. Meanwhile, Shelley

looked about him for a sphere of practical activity, in which he might prove to Godwin that he was no mere visionary, and display to Miss Hitchener their mutual principles crystallising into heroic achievement. For other reasons he had grown weary of Keswick. Harriet and Eliza had been honoured by a visit to the Duke of Norfolk at Greystoke, but Shelley could not tolerate for long the routine of ducal life, though he found the duke himself kind and friendly. The charm of Southey's talk, too, had worn away, now that he knew him to be "the paid champion of every abuse and absurdity." Under such circumstances the call to Ireland was peremptory; and some time in February 1812 the Shelleys and Eliza Westbrook, after a stormy sea-voyage, found themselves in Dublin.

The soil was at a first glance very promising for the seed which the ardent young reformer, still only nineteen, came to scatter. The evil fruits of misgovernment were already rotten there; the agitation for Catholic emancipation was growing to a revolutionary height; and the most ardent Irishmen were preaching repeal of the Union. Into this state of things came Shelley with his "Address to the Irish People," a short pamphlet which he proceeded forthwith to print and circulate. A second pamphlet contained a proposal for the formation of an association of all those who were interested in the welfare of Ireland. When we come to examine these pamphlets we shall be

compelled to agree with Godwin that the whole enterprise was unwise and that Shelley was too young to be of practical service. He had no knowledge of men or of affairs, and by no means a comprehensive knowledge of history. He was impatient of slow advances: Catholic emancipation he supported, but only as an instalment of a larger freedom for which the Irish were by no means prepared. He thought that he had only to point out to the Irish the necessity of a moral regeneration for them to find it as attractive and beautiful a necessity as he did. Large general ideas of liberty, equality, and virtue were not the intellectual sustenance that the disorderly and degraded populace of Dublin could feed upon: not even their leaders could sympathise with him. Shelley admitted to Miss Hitchener that "more hate me as a freethinker than love me as a votary of freedom." To Godwin he confessed his failure, though still maintaining the essential truth of his principles; in truth these principles have much sound sense, and, in the light of subsequent events, even the wildest of them do not read very alarmingly to-day. The idea, for instance, that governments have no rights *per se*, but only exist at the will of the governed, is almost an axiom to a modern democracy; and the whole of Shelley's "Declaration of Rights" would be regarded as a very mild socialism at the present time. And even in 1812, this declaration, though detained by the Customs officer at Holyhead, did not disturb the Secretaries of State. Shelley

left Ireland to its fate after two months' stay ; his intervention, whether on the platform or in print, was but a temporary excitement, intensely serious to himself and Miss Hitchener, half jocular to the less sensitive Harriet, and entirely incomprehensible to the Irish people themselves.

The preoccupation with practical politics dammed up the wells of poetry ; yet Shelley, not quite twenty years of age, could write to Godwin from Dublin : "You must know that I either am, or fancy myself, something of a poet." The verses written about this time were hurried and occasional, inspired by the vague emotions of the moment, and characterised rather by their easy fluency than by any great poetic power. The romantic scenery amid which he was to spend the rest of the year added to the poet's instinctive apprehension of beauty its own powerful impulse ; as a poet of nature Shelley was to be almost as original as he was in the robes of liberty and aspiration.

Returning from Ireland, the Shelleys took up their abode at Nantgwillt, a house at Cwm Elan amid the magnificent mountain scenery of Central Wales. Here Shelley met one of the best friends and one of the most discriminating of his admirers in later years—the novelist Thomas Love Peacock, a strange blend of the scholar and the cynic, the philosopher and the romantic. Peacock drew from Shelley in Italy some of his finest letters, and ever acted towards him as the kindly candid critic. Various anxieties, however, drove Shelley from his beautiful

surroundings; he moved to a house near Tintern Abbey, but was not contented; and not until midsummer was well past did he settle himself at Lynmouth, surely one of the loveliest places in England. There he was for two months completely happy. He was in perfect harmony with Harriet; he was stimulated by constant correspondence with the venerated Godwin; Miss Hitchener had joined his household at last and had not yet become a bore to him; and, finally, he was hard at work upon his first long poem, "Queen Mab." Nor did he neglect his propaganda in favour of free thought. He wrote now his lucid "Letter to Lord Ellenborough" in defence of one Eaton who had been prosecuted and pilloried for publishing Paine's "Age of Reason"; he had his "Declaration of Rights" distributed in the streets of Barnstaple, a proceeding which resulted in his servant being fined and imprisoned for fomenting sedition; and we have an account of the naïve enthusiast entrusting his message to the waves in floating boxes and to the winds in small fire balloons! All this made him an object of heart-burning and suspicion to the Devonshire authorities; communications passed between them and the Home Office; and the Town Clerk of Barnstaple was instructed to obtain further information respecting the strange agitator. But on arriving at Lynmouth for the purpose he found his quarry gone: Shelley had sailed from Ilfracombe to Swansea, and was already contemplating a new will-o'-the-wisp.

The little town of Tremadoc, on the southern shore of Carnarvonshire, was Shelley's next home. It is beautifully situated at the foot of the mountain-crags through which opens the pass of Aberglaslyn, leading on to Beddgelert and up to Snowdon : fascinating and delightful to Shelley's mind. But he was attracted to it for another reason. The whole town had been reclaimed from the sea by the enterprise of Mr. Madocks, M.P. for Boston ; and that gentleman was in the midst of a new series of operations, by which the area of the reclaimed land might be largely increased. The work appealed strongly to Shelley's imagination ; he took Tanyrallt, Mr. Madocks's house, and devoted both his money and himself to the project. The result in this instance was failure. Shelley visited London to raise money and obtain donations, without success. The workmen could not be properly paid, and their families suffered greatly from poverty and privation. Shelley worked without stint to combat the apathy of the rich and to relieve the hardships of the poor. His indignation against the one was only matched by his generous self-sacrifice for the other. The events at Tremadoc only served to sharpen the philosophy of " Queen Mab," which was completed in the midst of them. Face to face with his ardent and liberal hopes stood the embattled armies of evil : wild and hostile nature-forces, and men armoured in an impervious covering of prejudice, insensibility, and religion. ' Queen Mab " was

finished by March 1813. It is a formidable poem for a boy to have written : although he described it as " villainous trash " in 1821, it sprang quite naturally from the studies and experiences of the two years 1811–13. It shows the impression made upon him by his reading in the philosophers of the eighteenth century ; in Spinoza also, in Plato, in Godwin. It shows how the beauty and splendour of nature had already aroused in him that awe and worship which only deepened as the years passed. It shows, again, that impatience with all abuses, all states of imperfection, which, with an imperfect sense of the meaning of history, he ascribed to artificial and easily removable causes. It is the wild lyrical cry of his dreams, not yet dashed into the dust of disillusionment. It was the spirit that wrote " Queen Mab," in short, that also fought the sea at Tremadoc, and spent his strength and his substance in a vain effort to enlarge the power and diminish the sufferings of men. But it is unnecessary to read " Queen Mab." Everything that is good in it was afterwards said in other poems with greater power and beauty. Atheism was only a name on Shelley's lips to express his protest against the crimes that had been committed in the name of religion ; but it is flaunted in our ears during the course of the poem, and especially in the philosophical notes which Shelley added to it. Shelley also insists upon his hostility to the marriage-tie, and it is not remarkable that the poem brought him an evil reputation. Only

a few copies, however, were distributed, and those privately; three years later he issued a revised portion of the first two sections under a new title; and in 1821 the original poem was printed without his sanction and to his great annoyance. "Queen Mab" injured the poet's fame more than it ought; its opinions are wild enough, but allowance might well have been made for a boyish excess and exuberance, when there was so much obvious enthusiasm for things beautiful and good. Two disconnected stanzas will be sufficient to display the style of the poem, which was modelled on the irregular, unrhymed metre of Southey's "Thalaba":

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother, Sleep!
One, pale as yonder wan and hornèd moon
With lips of lurid blue;
The other glowing, like the vital morn
When, throned on ocean's wave,
It breathes over the world;
Yet both so passing strange and wonderful!

* * * * *

Far, far below the chariot's stormy path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous ocean lay.
Its broad and silent mirror gave to view
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tingeing those fleecy clouds
That cradled in their folds the infant dawn.
The chariot seemed to fly
Through the abyss of an immense concave,

Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

Such language conveys little to the mind; it is vague and unreal, and it seems to promise nothing of the music that Shelley was soon to give to the world. The discipline of rhyme would, perhaps, have been good for it; but then—it would not have been Shelley if fetters of any kind had been fastened on it. It was not written as a poem merely: it was the voice of a very juvenile prophet and world-reformer.

IV

SHELLEY left Tremadoc early in 1813 as the consequence of an attack which was made upon him in his own home by armed assassins. The motive for this attack is uncertain; but the idea of armed enemies, among the people whom he had so much benefited, was too much for Shelley's nerves, and he left Tanyrallt and all its attractions forthwith. Apparently he came at once to London and lived there, either in an hotel or in lodgings, till June. While in London he became intimately acquainted with Godwin and his household, an intimacy fraught with tremendous consequences for him. Godwin was an exacting hero who demanded many services, as well as veneration, from his worshippers. He was involved in chronic debt which Shelley

stinted and agitated himself to relieve ; but, more important than this, he had a daughter Mary, who was soon to mar the music of Shelley's married life. The poet spent much time with the needy philosopher, coming and going to his house in Skinner Street with the welcome which was due at once to his principles and to his generosity.

Meanwhile, Harriet was changing. She had hitherto been to some extent a sharer of her husband's enthusiasms, had allowed him to teach her Latin, and had been a real companion to him. During their stay in London her first daughter, Ianthe, was born ; and her view of life was more than modified. To her husband she was as devoted as ever, but she seems to have felt that it was time he had outgrown some of his eccentric ideas. In London, Shelley had set up a carriage for her, and Fanny Godwin had been impressed with her " fine lady " airs ; she, with Ianthe now to think about, quite naturally began to wish to take her proper station in life. All this developing slowly and vaguely, the cloud on the poet's happiness was but a fleck in the sky when he set up house-keeping again at Bracknell, in Berkshire, about July. A sonnet written about that time, however, seems to show that he was already fearful of the loss of sympathy which we have hinted at.

EVENING

TO HARRIET

O thou bright Sun ! beneath the dark blue line
 Of western distance that sublime descendest,
And, gleaming lovelier as thy beams decline,
 Thy million hues to every vapour lendest,
And, over cobweb lawn and grove and stream
 Sheddest the liquid magic of thy light,
 Till calm Earth, with the parting splendour bright,
Shows like the vision of a beauteous dream ;
What gazer now with astronomic eye
 Could coldly count the spots within thy sphere ?
Such were thy lover, Harriet, could he fly
 The thoughts of all that makes his passion dear,
And, turning senseless from thy warm caress,
Pick flaws in our close-woven happiness.

With the little Ianthe to add to his cares, the want of money from which Shelley suffered, and was still to suffer for some time, became a more serious question. Attempts at an arrangement between father and son were again made ; but the father demanded, as the price of peace, the complete surrender of his son's awful principles. This was the one impossible condition. Negotiations fell through, and Shelley was constrained to raise money on post-obit bonds in order to pay his debts and to help Godwin pay his. This was, of course, a ruinous proceeding, and Harriet might well have been impatient of the stubborn principles that made such shifts necessary. In spite of everything,

he left Bracknell, with Harriet, Ianthe, and Eliza, in the autumn for the Lakes. Thence they soon passed on to Edinburgh, where they stayed, with Peacock for companion, until December. They then returned to London, and by the commencement of 1814 were settled at Windsor, familiar to Shelley from his school-days. These peregrinations, it need not be said, cost money. Again the Shelleys were in sore straits; again Bysshe appealed in vain to his father; and again he was compelled to have recourse to the money-lenders. And to add to his misery, his joy in Harriet and his home-life was now irrevocably gone. Although, early in 1814, Shelley and Harriet were remarried according to English rites, estrangement had even then come between them. Whatever the cause may have been, Harriet was not living at Bracknell in April; on returning thither from a visit to London, Shelley expressed the sorrow of his loss in the following beautiful poem, perhaps the first wholly admirable verse he had yet written. It is evident that love, and the sympathy which for Shelley was its essence, had gone from his life when he wrote these lines:

AT BRACKNELL

STANZAS

Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drunk the last pale beam of even:
Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of Heaven.

Pause not! The time is past! Every voice cries,
Away!
Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's ungentle
mood:
Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat
thy stay;
Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

Away, away! to thy sad and silent home;
Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth;
Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and
come,
And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth.

The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float around
thine head:
The blooms of dewy spring shall gleam beneath thy
feet:
But thy soul or this world must fade in the frost that
binds the dead,
Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile, ere thou
and peace may meet.

The cloud shadows of midnight possess their own
repose,
For the weary winds are silent, or the moon is in
the deep:
Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean knows;
Whatever moves, or toils, or grieves, hath its
appointed sleep.

Thou in the grave shalt rest—yet till the phantoms
flee
Which that house and heath and garden made dear
to thee erewhile,

Thy remembrance, and repentance, and deep musings
are not free
From the music of two voices and the light of one
sweet smile.

Harriet did not respond to her husband's efforts at reconciliation ; she remained at Bath while Shelley flitted to and fro in London. He was exceedingly depressed by his wife's coldness and hardness, and it was while he was in this mood that he was led to notice the pale face and piercing eyes of Mary Godwin. The daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, it is not surprising that, even at seventeen, Mary should have united in herself wide intellectual interests with a deep and passionate sensitiveness. Though not handsome, she was impressive by the fire of her eyes and the quiet strength of her general demeanour ; and, touching Shelley's heart at its most painful moment, she took the place there that Harriet had forsaken. Love soon throve under such favourable circumstances. Mary shared Shelley's ideas in a sense that Harriet could not : she had been educated in them. Nevertheless, her father did his best to thwart the evident attachment that was growing between them, and Shelley himself wavered between his duty to Harriet and his new-found rapture. He wrote to his wife with great kindness and consideration ; but by the beginning of July he had convinced himself that she had become unfaithful to him, not only in spirit, but in conduct also. This suspicion

was almost certainly unjust to Harriet. She may have become hard, worldly, and selfish : she remained at this time true to her husband. He firmly believed, nevertheless, in the stories of her infidelity ; and if on his principles he needed any such justification for his elopement with Mary, he felt that he had it. That in the happiness of his union with Mary he did not forget Harriet is clear from the solicitous letters he wrote to her ; he urged her always to look to him—nay, actually to come to him, while he was travelling with Mary in Switzerland ; he took care that she was provided with sufficient money for her needs and enjoyments ; and at no time was he conscious that she was in any way dissatisfied with her separation from him. Before going away with Mary, Shelley had written to her, proposing the separation ; and she, it appears, acquiesced : she was enjoying herself at Bath, and possibly expected that Shelley would tire of Mary and return to her. It was a terrible misunderstanding for her ; Shelley loved Mary as he had never loved Harriet—with a love that was to last unimpaired to the end, that was to grow with the growth of his spirit, and to pour its soul into the rich poetry of the coming years. That he lightly followed the leading of his passion is true, and his conduct is condemned by the ensuing catastrophe ; that his passion itself, on the other hand, was a light one, his whole later life was to contradict.

Shelley and Mary set sail for France at the

end of July 1814. They were accompanied by Mary's half-sister, Mary Jane Clairmont (Claire), who was to play a prominent part in their future lives. Claire is described as a witty, eager, and romantic girl, dark-eyed and olive-cheeked; enthusiastic, yet fretful; musical, indolent, obstinate, industrious;—a wayward blend of contradictory qualities. Like her companions, she kept a diary of their progress; but on the whole it is doubtful whether she was altogether a welcome companion. From Calais the travellers proceeded to Paris, where they remained only a few days waiting for funds. Having purchased an ass for Mary, who had been greatly fatigued by the journey, they went on to Charenton on foot; there the ass was exchanged for a mule and the journey continued to Troyes. From this place Shelley wrote a letter to Harriet. "I write to you from this detestable town," he begins; "I write to show that I do not forget you; I write to urge you to come to Switzerland, where you will find at least one firm and constant friend, to whom your interests will be always dear—by whom your feelings will never wilfully be injured. . . .

"We came 120 miles in four days; the last two days we passed over the country that was the seat of war. I cannot describe to you the frightful desolation of this scene; village after village entirely ruined and burned, the white ruins towering in innumerable forms of destruction among the beautiful trees. The inhabitants were famished; families once independent now

beg their bread in this wretched country; no provisions, no accommodation; filth, misery, and famine everywhere. I must remark to you that, dreadful as these calamities are, I can scarcely pity the inhabitants; they are the most unamiable, inhospitable, and unaccommodating of the human race. . . .

"You shall know our adventures more detailed if I do not hear at Neufchâtel that I am soon to have the pleasure of communicating with you in person, and of welcoming you to some sweet retreat I will procure for you among the mountains. . . .

"With love to my sweet little Ianthe, ever most affectionately yours."

At Neufchâtel there was naturally no answer to this artless letter. The journey, which it describes, evidently had its drawbacks; but these were compensated by the delight of the lovers in their companionship, and by the vision of the Alpine scenery which now came upon them. At Brunnen and at Lucerne everything was exquisite except the lodgings and the pressing need of money; these combined to turn their steps homeward, but not before Shelley had commenced his incomplete romance, "The Assassins." The return journey was made by the Reuss and the Rhine as far as Cologne—a journey which impressed Shelley's mind with some of the beautiful scenery of "Alastor." In September the wanderers were back in London.

The rest of the year was gloomy. Harassed

by the continual pressure of accumulating debts, hunted by creditors and forced to hide from the danger of arrest, Shelley found solace only in Mary, whose mind was of a rare fineness and bore up splendidly against all external coldness and bodily weakness. Godwin refused to see the erring pair, though he was not unwilling to allow Shelley to be tormented by his financial difficulties. Harriet also was a source of annoyance; Shelley saw her several times to his discomfiture, finding her sordid and hectoring in her demands; but, for the sake of the son born to her in November, he did all he could in the way of financial assistance. As a repose to his tortured spirit, he was able to read much during the winter evenings. His studies ranged from Laplace and Goethe to Seneca and Æschylus; he commenced to teach Mary Greek; and he read "Rokeby" and "Lara" aloud for their joint recreation. Yet his health had become precarious; the death of Mary's first infant, a fortnight old, was another blow to his worried nerves; and the failure of the legal negotiations concerning the sale of his interest in his father's estate depressed him still further. The latter business, begun on the death of his grandfather early in 1815, would have provided him with an income of £1000 a year, if the Court of Chancery had not vetoed the plan. He received enough for his immediate needs and settled £200 a year on Harriet at once, but permanent relief from the pressure of straitened means was not to be obtained yet.

After some days of wandering in search of a country home, Shelley and Mary settled at Bishopsgate on the borders of Windsor Forest. Shelley spent much time on the water ; and his health improved very greatly under the influence of the exercise, the fresh air, and the sunshine. Always happy in a boat, his spirits rose with his improved health, and he dreamed of travelling over the beautiful parts of England by water. The company of Peacock was a further help in the restoration of his spirits. Nevertheless, there lay at the back of his mind, now and henceforth constantly, a haze of sadness which no sunshine could dispel. His generous illusions had not, indeed, vanished, but they had come to no effectual good ; much of his time and thought of late had been dissipated in the sordid irritations of legal arrangements ; his love, now fixed so serenely and happily on Mary, was still clouded by the memory of Harriet ; all his relations with his fellow-men were, in fact, veiled by some disappointment. He had become conscious of the invincible forces against which his winged ideals beat themselves in vain. It is this sense of failure that inspired the little poem written, during his journey up the Thames, in Lechlade, in Gloucestershire. In the midst of his happiness the brooding upon the mystery of death comes naturally to him.

A SUMMER EVENING CHURCHYARD

LECHLADE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray ;
And pallid Evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of Day :
Silence and Twilight, unbeloved of men,
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea ;
Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,
Responding to the charm with its own mystery.
The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, aërial Pile ! whose pinnacles
Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
Obeyest in silence their sweet solemn spells,
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
Around whose lessening and invisible height
Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres :
And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound,
Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,
Breathed from their wormy beds all living things around,
And mingling with the still night and mute sky
Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnised and softened, death is mild
And terrorless as this serenest night :
Here could I hope, like some inquiring child

Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human
sight
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

It was on his return to Bishopsgate, and in the same mood, that Shelley wrote "Alastor." This is the first of his poems to contain the unequivocal note of great and enduring poetry; prejudice alone could be obtuse to its music. Its blank verse alone should have made it memorable: only that of Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth at his very best, had hitherto surpassed it as an instrument for the expression of human emotions and ideas. But the poem is a great contribution also to the literature of the Romantic Movement. It represents a youth of fine feelings and romantic genius adventuring into the farthest reaches of thought. Conceiving an ideal, he seeks a personification of his conception in human form. He is disappointed, and dies. Yet, as Shelley tells us in his preface, such a fate is preferable to the moral death of those who have not thirsted for knowledge or perfection. The disappointment of the hero of "Alastor" was his own; but he will not confess his ideal wrong, nor cease to search for it. In Mary he has found a great love, yet his ideal is still "fearfully afar"; he feels that he too is soon to die, and thus to learn the immortal meaning of his quest.

"Alastor" is a poem to be studied whole: it is an intensely felt revelation of the author's

nature and visions, conveyed in language which may often be vague, but is only vague as great music is. The sway of emotion never fails us, either in the personal passages or in the magnificent descriptions of nature which abound in it. The following quotation assuredly blends the hero of "Alastor" with the author of the poem; it describes the visions that haunted his youth:

ALASTOR

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes

Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder ; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

Like Shelley, the poet in "Alastor" loved to entrust himself in a boat to the ocean and to mysterious streams. Finding the earth yield him only disillusionment and despair, he takes a light shallop into the sea, and is whirled with the speed of imagination into wondrous places, desperately seeking his ideal love. Descriptions rapid and vivid as the movement of the restless soul follow his flight. We supply one short passage, no more beautiful than several more :

At midnight
The moon arose : and lo ! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves
Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save ?—

The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
The crags closed round with black and jaggèd arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed.—" Vision and Love ! "
The Poet cried aloud, " I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long ! "

In a poem written later in this year 1816, " The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," the same theme is touched with greater concentration. Yet, though he has felt its presence all his life, he knows now that the spirit of Beauty cannot be realised. He cannot reconcile himself to the fact, but he knows it to be so.

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen among us,—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance ;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
Like memory of music fled,—
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river;
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown;
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom;—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

Later in life, too, shortly before his death, Shelley felt his mistake: "I think one is always in love with something or other; the error . . . consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal," he wrote. Yes: but does "Alastor" lose its poetic power because its author was a young man deluded by a beautiful error? Surely it is, and will ever be, the voice of that soul-hunger which is the stimulus of man's grandest achievements? And in the "Hymn" the ecstasy of aspiration is made to justify a calm fortitude when its noon has faded into the serene of evening.

Early in 1816 was born Mary's first son, named William, after her father; and until his death a few years later the boy was precious in the eyes of both his parents. Still, circumstances were awkward, and money was deficient. In the hope of being able to live more economically, Shelley and Mary, taking with

them Claire Clairmont and the young baby, set out about April for Switzerland. After a few unpleasant days in Paris they reached Geneva in May. Soon after their arrival Byron also appeared, and the two poets became close acquaintances. Friends in the true sense they could never be, in spite of a certain mutual respect and some similarity of opinions. Both were romantic poets, with strong revolutionary aims, strangers in their own country and rebels against the world's conventions ; but there the resemblance ceases. In comparison with Shelley, Byron was " of the earth earthy " ; his ideals were chiefly destructive ; he was selfish, cynical, haughty often coarse, flippant, and heartless ; and though at times impelled into nobler moods, he lacked the steady seriousness of purpose and the passionate zeal in pursuit of an ideal which never left Shelley Shelley admired Byron's great mental powers at a very generous valuation, but was repelled by his lack of earnestness and by his merely defiant poses. On the other hand, Byron found Shelley the purest and finest nature among living men ; and it is certain that under the influence of Shelley's presence Byron's work took a higher tone and a more perfect form. At Geneva the two poets saw much of one another, and the advantage went almost entirely to Byron. Together they made an excursion in a boat round the lake of Geneva ; they visited Chamouni, and Shelley's lines on " Mont Blanc " were the result ; they discussed with ardour

literature, life, and philosophy, and speculated upon ghosts and the phenomena of sleep. A minor consequence of this last interest was Mary's "Frankenstein," a readable tale of the supernatural. Letters to Peacock, rich in splendid descriptions, reveal the joy and rapture with which this visit to the mountains and the glaciers filled the spirit of Shelley; he was thrilled by the adventurous precipices over which he climbed with headstrong fearlessness; and the finest poems of his after-life were to be fragrant with the memories of Switzerland.

On his return home, however, he was to face experience of another and more bitter kind. He had taken a house at Marlow, and while it was being prepared for him he and Mary were staying at Bath. There they heard of the suicide of Fanny Godwin, Mary's half-sister, who had lived a melancholy existence in Godwin's house and was the best friend the Shelleys had there. This shock was severe enough; but it was followed by the news of the death of Harriet, who had drowned herself in the Serpentine early in December. Thus ended the episode which is the most real cloud upon Shelley's life and fame. It is no doubt possible to make apologies for his conduct; it is certain that, whatever her actions may have been before the separation, Harriet did not follow the direct paths of virtue afterwards; but no evidence exists to convict her of unfaithfulness until she saw that reconciliation was hopeless. The plain fact remains, unpalatable as it is to those of us

who are perplexed by the contradiction it involves: Shelley deserted Harriet, withdrew his love and protection from her in favour of Mary, and could not see that he had wronged her. It was the one selfish act of his life; in his love for Mary, he did not enter into Harriet's feelings at all, deemed it nothing that she should be deposed from her throne and serve as a satellite for the greater love. We have mentioned the change in Harriet's nature; we may also note the fact that thoughts of suicide were often with her, even in comparatively happy days; but allowing all this, her tragic end is a dismal commentary upon the practical application of Shelley's unconventional ideas. He acted up to them strictly and, although he never forgot the material needs of Harriet and his children, the inevitable tragedy followed. That it affected him deeply, both now and always, there can be no doubt; he could never recall it without acute agitation of spirit; but he never felt that he had done wrong, never experienced any abiding remorse. Before the year was out he had formally made Mary his legal wife.

Up to this point it cannot be denied that a certain unpleasant mist bedims the pure intentions of the poet's life. There is something repulsive in watching this ethereal spirit bedraggled in the mire of Godwin's sordid household, hunted by bailiffs, badgered by attorneys, glorying in an atheism which he did not feel, branded as a wife-deserter with the stigma of

illicit love. Foul charges were to be pinned to his name in future years also, but they were merely the rotten fruit of these mistakes of early life, and we need not mention them again. One act more is to be played ere the tragedy becomes complete: henceforth the real Shelley, the generous, aspiring poet whom we all love, is alone to be our companion.

The two children of Harriet, Ianthe and Charles, had been left in their mother's care, in spite of Shelley's eager wish to have them. Now that Harriet was dead, Shelley naturally expected to have his wish gratified. But Harriet's parents had other ideas, and appealed to the Court of Chancery to prevent it. A long and tedious legal action followed. On behalf of Mr. Westbrook, who saw in Charles Bysshe Shelley a future baronet of great wealth, it was urged that Shelley's opinions, especially those declared in "Queen Mab," unfitted him to guide the education of children, and his conduct towards Harriet showed that his principles were by no means mere idle speculations. To this Shelley would have replied that it was tyranny to punish a man on account of his intellectual views; but his counsel laid the greater stress upon Harriet's unfitness and infidelity, and sought to justify the poet's treatment of her. Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, was a very good and conscientious lawyer, but he was hardly qualified to appreciate Shelley's position or to realise how genuine was his love for his children. He did not decide hastily, but post-

poned his actual decision until July 1818. Only rabid defenders of Shelley can quarrel with his judgment. Shelley was an extraordinary man, but the law of England could take no account of that; the children were to be placed in the care of an Anglican clergyman and educated in accordance with their position and prospects. It was common sense; but to Shelley it was an almost unendurable blow, an outrage upon the laws of nature. In the end Shelley's nomination of a guardian, in the person of Dr. Hume, a physician, was accepted by the Court; he was permitted to see his children once a month; only he would not be given the opportunity to poison them with his wild opinions. But before this final arrangement was made he was living in Italy. He was nervously fearful lest the talons of the law should tear Mary's children from him also, and he never returned to the country which, in spite of all, he loved and yearned for as his home.

V

WHILE the Chancery proceedings had been distracting his thoughts that is, throughout the year 1817—Shelley had been living at Marlow. Though fretted by his disappointment and depressed by very bad health, Shelley never lived a fuller life than he spent in 1817. Much poetry and much study, many friendships and many unremembered benefactions, adorned a profitable and

productive time. His marriage with Mary had restored him to the favour of Godwin, who acted the part of candid critic towards the written statement of his case which Shelley made for the Courts, and who borrowed his money on the same easy terms as heretofore. Nor was Godwin the only notable friend to benefit from Shelley's generosity. At various times Leigh Hunt, whose liberal principles aroused Shelley's enthusiasm, received useful sums from him ; and Thomas Love Peacock, an eccentric man of genius who was a real friend of the poet, received for some time an annual allowance from him. Leigh Hunt was one of Shelley's staunchest admirers, and he brought about an interesting meeting between him and Keats, who was not so favourably impressed with Shelley as Shelley was with him. Hunt has also given us some recollections of the life at Marlow. We see the poet seated in a little study "adorned with casts, as large as life, of the Vatican Apollo and the celestial Venus" ; he is hard at work upon "Laon and Cythna," or steeping himself in his favourite books—Æschylus, Homer, Plato, the Bible ; scorning the creeds of the churches, he lives the life of the Christian—visiting the sick, relieving the needy, denying himself the minor luxuries of life in conformity with his principles. But all the time his health is bad, and he is pre-occupied with those legal proceedings which wounded his heart but only strengthened the fine fibre of his character. Nor must we forget

that his home contained as permanent guests Claire Clairmont and her child, Allegra, the daughter of Lord Byron; Claire's troubles, the bitter fruit of her romantic infatuation for the most prominent Englishman of his time, became a part of Shelley's life, and he was her loyal and generous protector to the end.

Amid all his difficulties, however, he persevered with "Laon and Cythna," a long and in many respects a noble poem. It was mostly written in the open air during the summer months of 1817; a few copies were issued later in the year, but Shelley's publisher induced him to make certain changes in its scheme, and consequently it was not finally published until January 1818. Its title had then been changed to "The Revolt of Islam," and one or two rocks of offence withdrawn from it. In spite of this it is revolutionary enough, outraging in eloquent language the most cherished conventions of ordinary men. Its motive was to arouse the faith in liberty, the devotion to a high ideal of life, which its author deemed to be latent in all mankind. It was to glorify Love as the saving talisman of the world, and to poise the natural and unalloyed human affections amid the confused currents of civilised life. The aspiring and generous mind flying in the face of brutal despotism, victorious at first by its eloquence, hurled back into martyrdom at the end and dying with his beautiful lover—this is Laon: it is the poet himself, bewildered, desperate, yet unable to escape

from his vast visions and wide hopes ; speaking a language rich and strange, though often uncertain or incomprehensible ; and touching us with a profound sympathy, even when he injures most our sense of propriety. The plot of the story, as far as it can be discovered, is tiresome and in some respects repulsive ; but "The Revolt of Islam" must not be read for its story, or even for its didactic meaning. It is written in Spenserian stanzas, and is not unsuitable for comparison with Spenser's masterpiece. Like "The Faerie Queene," it is more beautiful in its details than as a whole. Its subsidiary incidents are often told with a rushing zest that carries us away with them ; its scenery is brilliant, almost blinding us with excess of light ; but the music of its eloquent appeals is best of all. Even in his wildest warfare against society Shelley provides the reconcilement of exquisite poetry. Like Spenser, Shelley was compact of poetry ; but whereas Spenser's genius throve best on colour and on mediævalism, Shelley's flowed out into melody and was fed by the fervour of revolutionary hopes. Both, as true romantic poets, surprise us continually by their "fine excess." "The Revolt of Islam" is rich indeed unto rankness. Giving suitable shrift, however, to its undigested opinions, we shall find in it, after the discount has been allowed, the poetic atmosphere—many glorious passages and fine descriptions. Much trimming and pruning, a more severe intellectual treatment, would be necessary to

make it a great poem as a whole. But Shelley was studying the Greeks, and the sense of proportion and harmony was growing in him: meanwhile, "The Revolt of Islam" is a land of great promise, the earnest of the harvest that is shortly to come. It is a poem difficult to sample fairly, but we must find space for a few characteristic stanzas. Laon is telling his earlier life-story through the soul of Shelley:

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,
And in no careless heart transcribed the tale;
But, from the sneers of men who had grown hoary
In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and pale
With the heart's warfare; did I gather food
To feed my many thoughts: a tameless multitude!

I wandered through the wrecks of days departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even
O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise; in the northern Heaven,
Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
The mountains lay beneath our planet pale;
Around me, broken tombs and columns riven
Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale
Waked in those ruins gray its everlasting wail!

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
Nor had I heard the story of their deeds;

But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds
Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
The language which they speak ; and now, to me
The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

Such man has been, and such may yet become !
Ay, wiser, greater, gentler, even than they
Who on the fragments of yon shattered dome
Have stamped the sign of power—I felt the sway
Of the vast stream of ages bear away
My floating thoughts—my heart beat loud and fast—
Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray
Of the still moon, my spirit onward past
Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult cast.

It shall be thus no more ! too long, too long,
Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain bound
In darkness and in ruin !—Hope is strong,
Justice and Truth their wingèd child have found—
Awake ! arise ! until the mighty sound
Of your career shall scatter in its gust
The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
Whose Idol has so long betrayed your impious trust !

The tenor of "The Revolt of Islam" did nothing to conciliate either English society or the official literary critics. Shelley feared that the law would tear Mary's children from him, and it would not have been surprising if such an attempt had been made. The birth of another daughter in the autumn of 1817

increased his anxiety, which drove him at last to leave England for Italy, where he might be free from the tortures that embittered him. Two other poems of some importance the year 1817 produced—"Prince Athanase" and "Rosalind and Helen." Neither of these stands in the highest rank among his poems. Their interest arises chiefly from their essentially autobiographical character. Prince Athanase is Shelley in rather a melancholy mood, and the portrait was never completed; but Lionel in "Rosalind and Helen" is a vivid sketch of his idealised self, and the description of him is, perhaps, the most satisfactory part of that poem. With the completion of the three poems named, Shelley completed his work in England; he left for Italy in March 1818, and never saw his native land again. Four years more he was to live, and those were years overflowing with music; very little indeed of this matchless lyrical verse, continually growing deeper in thought and richer in emotion, could be spared from the temple of our poetry or has need of such apology as we have had to make for his earlier work.

VI

LEAVING Dover on March 12, 1818, the Shelleys, accompanied by Claire and Allegra, went direct to Italy and arrived at Milan early in April. During most of the year they travelled about, visiting Lake Como, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Padua,

Bologna, Ferrara, and Rome, and settling for the winter months at Naples. It was for Shelley a time of excitement and agitation ; but on every ground it was also a beneficent time. His health varied, and he suffered spasmodically from acute and mysterious pains which hard work only served to accentuate. His spirits varied also, from the heights of boyish hilarity to the very depths of dejection ; but the beauty of nature and art, which he met with everywhere, enriched his imagination and broadened his powers. This is evident from his letters to Peacock and others, which abound in fine prose descriptions and can well challenge comparison with any similar correspondence in our language. But it is more evident in the poetry : the turbid stream became crystal clear, visionary gleams vanished in the sunlight of an exquisite reality, and we see Venice or the Euganean hills instead of enchanted boats and subterranean rivers. He did not, like Browning, enter into the spirit of the Italian past or into its everyday life ; the great buildings and unique art treasures interested him, but did not impress him so deeply as the sunny skies, the wide prospects, the eerie "whisper of the Apennine" ; these made a new atmosphere for his spirit, and elevated his new poems into masterpieces. Listen, for example, to this lyrical snatch, written at a lonely inn among the summits of the Apennines :

PASSAGE OF THE APENNINES

Listen, listen, Mary mine,
To the whisper of the Apennine,
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's roar,
Or like the sea on a northern shore,
Heard in its raging ebb and flow
By the captives pent in the cave below.
The Apennine in the light of day
Is a mighty mountain dim and gray,
Which between the earth and sky doth lay ;
But when night comes, a chaos dread
On the dim starlight then is spread,
And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm,
Shrouding . . .

One of Shelley's tasks in Italy was to bring about some sort of accommodation between Claire and Byron concerning the care of Allegra. Claire had surrendered her child to Byron ; but she was anxious to see it, and Byron was callous and tyrannical towards her, regarding her bluntly as an unmitigated nuisance. Shelley during August went to Venice to see what he could do for Claire, and was hospitably welcomed by Byron, who liked Shelley's society but would neither see nor satisfy Claire. This sordid business did not, however, entirely spoil Shelley's visit to Venice ; nor did it rob us of its fine literary fruit, the poem " Julian and Maddalo." This poem is doubtless the imaginative reflection of conversations which Shelley had with Byron. It represents the clash of the two temperaments : in Maddalo we have Byron in all his passionate

and tempestuous genius, proud, contemptuous, cynical; in Julian the ardent and serious philosopher, slow to be satisfied with the world as it is, not denying the evil in it, but determined to find some means of stamping upon it the superiority of the good. Maddalo draws from Julian his wildest speculations, and confounds him with the sad story of a madman whom he introduces to him. The great gifts of Byron were always very impressive to Shelley's mind: they astounded him; but he saw, and no one more clearly, how they were carelessly flung away upon a nature so lacking in seriousness, so flippant, and so vain. Byron's conduct to Claire disgusted Shelley by its heartlessness; henceforward, Shelley's feelings towards him were to contain still more of disgust and repulsion, mingled with the generous admiration which it was impossible to deny to the author of "Cain" and of the early cantos of "Don Juan." That Shelley saw the real Byron justly is evident from the character of Maddalo. The purple patch of this poem is not that, however, but the following magnificent nature-piece:

JULIAN AND MADDALO

The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light.
Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,
Over the horizon of the mountains;—Oh,
How beautiful is sunset, when the glow

Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy !
Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the
towers
Of cities they encircle !—it was ours
To stand on thee, beholding it : and then,
Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
Were waiting for us with the gondola.—
As those who pause on some delightful way
Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
Looking upon the evening, and the flood
Which lay between the city and the shore,
Paved with the image of the sky . . . the hoar
And aery Alps towards the North appeared
Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared
Between the East and West ; and half the sky
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry
Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep West into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many-folded hills : they were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
As seen from Lido thro' the harbour piles,
The likeness of a clump of peakèd isles—
And then—as if the Earth and Sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering as from waves of flame
Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent. " Ere it fade,"
Said my companion, " I will show you soon
A better station "—so, o'er the lagune
We glided ; and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark

How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven.

While Shelley was at Venice, Byron offered him the use of his villa at Este, amid the Euganean hills and commanding a fine wide prospect of the broad plain of Lombardy. Thither Mary and Claire came ; but on the way, serious illness overtook the little Clara, Mary's youngest child, and in spite of every attention the infant died. The grief of both parents was deep and poignant ; it threw a gloom over their beautiful surroundings, but combined with them to produce one of Shelley's most beautiful lyrics, the "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills." It is one of those "sweetest songs" "that tell of saddest thought" ; and surely there are few lyric poems which for some four hundred lines are sustained at such a high level of exquisite melody. Some of it must be quoted, but it is all beautiful—perfectly Shelleyan, and in lyric poetry there can be no higher praise.

LINES WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS

Ay, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony :
To such a one this morn was led,
My bark by soft winds piloted :
'Mid the mountains Euganean
I stood listening to the pæan
With which the legioned rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestical ;

Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow, down the dark steep streaming,
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair ;
Underneath Day's azure eyes
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo ! the sun upsprings behind,
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline ;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,

Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies ;
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sea-girt City, thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen ;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier.
A less drear ruin then than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne, among the waves
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew
Flies, as once, before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,
Save where many a palace gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of Ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandoned sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way,
Wandering at the close of day,
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Leap a rapid masque of death
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through aërial gold,
As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Sepulchres, where human forms,
Like pollution-nourished worms,
To the corpse of greatness cling,
Murdered, and now mouldering :
But if Freedom should awake
In her omnipotence, and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime ;
If not, perish thou and they !—
Clouds which stain truth's rising day
By her sun consumed away—
Earth can spare ye : while like flowers
In the waste of years and hours,
From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.

* * * * *

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of Life and Agony :
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf : even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,

May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell mid lawny hills,
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine :
We may live so happy there,
That the Spirits of the Air,
Envying us, may even entice
To our healing Paradise
The polluting multitude ;
But their rage would be subdued
By that clime divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves ;
While each breathless interval
In their whisperings musical
The inspired soul supplies
With its own deep melodies,
And the love which heals all strife
Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood :
They, not it, would change ; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.

Most of the ensuing winter was spent at Naples, and the low spirits of the early months of the year deepened into acute dejection. Shelley had no congenial friends near him, and ordinary

society was intolerable; he and Mary were therefore thrown very much upon their own resources, and a great deal of reading was done. The Greek tragedians were the main theme; but Shelley began to steep himself in the Italian poets and, with greater sympathy, in Goethe and Calderon. He has left us some translations of the works of the last two, and they show a keen appreciation of the essential merits of both. He mused much also upon the metaphysical questions which always attracted him, and he gave fruitful study to the real meaning and message of poetry. At the same time, he was so keenly conscious of the imperfections of our social life, still so eager for human regeneration, that he was uneasy whether he was doing wisely or rightly in devoting his life to poetry. And the great poem that he was soon to give the world was inspired far more by his social and philosophical aspirations than by the impulse of a purely artistic desire. In him the poet meant the prophet, the philosopher, and the preacher; and now, when the winter nipped him and ill-health cramped him, he was over-conscious of the missioner's despair, as he contemplated the frailty of the barque wherein he was to encounter the storms of the world. Too frequently, even among these happiest days of his life, did he appear to himself as one vainly beating on unyielding walls, behind which eternal truth lay concealed. The "Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples" were the voice of this mood.

STANZAS WRITTEN IN DEJECTION NEAR NAPLES

I

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,
The breath of the moist earth is light,
Around its unexpanded buds ;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The City's voice itself, is soft like Solitude's.

II

I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown ;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown :
I sit upon the sands alone,—
The lightning of the noontide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet ! did any heart now share in my emotion.

III

Alas ! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure ;—
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

IV

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are ;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

V

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan ;
They might lament—for I am one
Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

The comradeship of Mary during the whole of his Italian life was, one might have imagined, the most suitable that Shelley could have desired. And there can be no doubt that he appreciated her unique and splendid qualities—her love, her quick intelligence, her serious and unvarying sympathy with his studies and his hopes. There are hints that Mary was fond of the society of ordinary people, and there was a slander that she was jealous of Shelley's solicitude for Claire ; but we may dismiss all this and confidently assert that no such funda-

mental differences disturbed Shelley's second married life. As much human happiness as the world could give him he obtained from Mary. But such happiness was in his philosophy selfishness ; his strong love for Mary was personal to her ; and the word Love connoted far more than the bringer of a purely individual joy. Love was for him the regenerating spirit of the universe—the spirit that, when found by mankind, would cut the Gordian knot of all his perplexities and wickedness. The love for an individual was swallowed up in this greater love, omnipresent yet evanescent, everywhere perceptible but evermore eluding us ; in the Love which peoples the universe with beautiful things and thoughts. And when his quest for this mighty, all-renewing Love became to him an uncertain phantom, he would wander solitary by the seashore and relieve his despair with poems which, as Mary herself tells us, he would not show to her for fear of giving her pain. The following poem belongs to such a mood as this, and later, in " Epipsychidion " he was to give his idea a complete expression :

LINES TO AN INDIAN AIR

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how ?
To thy chamber window, Sweet !

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
The Champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart ;—
As I must on thine,
Oh, Belovèd as thou art !

O lift me from the grass !
I die ! I faint ! I fail !
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale,
My cheek is cold and white, alas !
My heart beats loud and fast ;—
Oh ! press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last.

In the spring of 1819 the Shelleys moved to Rome, which they had merely glanced at on their way to Naples. Here there was more society for the wanderers, and, Shelley's health improving with the springtime, he found much to interest him. The visit is, however, memorable in his life because it saw the completion of his noblest and most ambitious work, the drama of "Prometheus Unbound." Conceived during the previous summer this drama was brought to its accomplishment at Rome. It was written for the most part amid the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla ; but it bears upon itself little of the spirit of Rome or its great past ; and indeed it is essentially a history of the future in the form of a myth cast into a

dramatic form. It is "The Revolt of Islam" in a new guise sublimed from its dross, enriched by the pure ore of experience and thought. There is no need to make here any sort of apology or allowance : we are dealing with one of the imperishable poems of its epoch—perhaps with the greatest.

The story of Prometheus chained to his rock and condemned to his everlasting torture for his enlightened goodness to men, made a natural appeal to Shelley. For Prometheus personified the forces which make for light and liberty in the universe, in contrast and conflict with Zeus, the embodiment of tyranny and evil. The oppression of Prometheus filled Shelley's veins with fever. Was this to be the end of the benefactors of mankind? Was a brute despotism to glory in the woes and darkness of men evermore? Are we doomed for ever to crouch and grovel before a loveless tyrant, restrained by no moral law, rejoicing in nothing save his own ruthless Power? To leave Prometheus conquered, to see him loosed by submission—either of these was in Shelley's mind to acknowledge the ultimate defeat of Good by Evil, of Love by Hate, of Freedom by Slavery. This was not Shelley's faith ; and he therefore unbinds Prometheus, not following the Greek myth literally, but distilling from it its quintessence and purifying it in the alembic of his soaring imagination. The result is a drama which cannot indeed be called a play—a drama in which the characters are but shadows,

—spirits ; a lyrical drama drenched with the purest poetry, and singing the hopes of man, the glory of Love, the beauty of nature, in verses of such exquisite melody that they often seem to cross the borderland into the realms of music. The *emotion* of the romantic and revolutionary movements has, in " Prometheus Unbound," been caught in its most ethereal flight. We do not test this drama with the intellect ; those who attempt to do so will find it a meaningless rhapsody. That does not imply that the poem has no definite meaning. Far from it. But the meaning only comes to those who are competent to hear the spirit-voices which haunt the atmosphere of all true poetry.

We have no space for a detailed analysis of " Prometheus Unbound," profitable as the task might be ; but we must give our reader an idea of the exquisite harmonies that, like the sounds and voices of nature, float about it everywhere.

First, a short song. Asia, the Spirit of Nature, has been transfigured into the Spirit of Love ; and at the moment of her change, voices in the air are heard singing :

Life of Life ! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them ;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire ; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light ! thy limbs are burning
 Through the vest which seems to hide them ;
As the radiant lines of morning
 Through the clouds ere they divide them ;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others ; none beholds thee,
 But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
 From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever !

Lamp of Earth ! where'er thou movest
 Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
 Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing !

Next, a passage of blank verse, which at once illustrates our poet's power over this master-weapon of English poetry, and shows us his aspirations as they were moulded into imaginative vision. The Spirit of the Hour speaks to the liberated Prometheus :

Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change : the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the spherèd world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see

Into the mysteries of the universe :
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire ;
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel,—
In memory of the tidings it has borne,—
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbenic snake
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear ?
As I have said, I floated to the earth :
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be ; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things ; but soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled ; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
" All hope abandon ye who enter here " ;
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will

Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak ;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill ;
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, past ; gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure ;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven ; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons ; wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors: mouldering round,
These imaged to the pride of kings and priests

A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment ; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,—
Which, under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world ;
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
And slain amid men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,—
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines :
The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed or hoped, is torn aside ;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself ; just, gentle, wise : but man
Passionless ?—no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

Lastly, a portion of the fourth act must be given. This act was not written at the same time as the rest of the poem, and is not, perhaps,

dramatically necessary. But it is so saturated with the most essential spirit of poetry that such pedantry is silenced. It is like a lyrical celebration of the joy of all nature in the victory of Prometheus and his union with Asia. The spirit of Love has brought new life everywhere. Even the Moon and the Earth are not unaffected, and from the dialogue between them we take the following :

THE EARTH

It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers ;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being :
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love ;
Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even,
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move :

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft

Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs
is poured ;
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men ! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress ;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free
wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea ;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love ;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they
could be !

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not over-
whelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold
mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass ;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their
children wear ;

Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave ; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on !
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air ;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets ? Man unveils me ; I have none.

The composition of this drama cost Shelley very severe mental labour ; he overtaxed his strength ; and again came the reaction into deep spiritual gloom. In the midst of it his son William died, and was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome. The boy was greatly beloved both of his father and his mother, and neither could bear to stay longer in Rome. They accordingly moved to Leghorn where lived Mrs. Gisborne, a lively and intelligent woman, a friend of Godwin's, and one of the best friends Shelley was to have in Italy. Her company cheered Mary, and did nothing to stay the wonderful flow of poetry that was issuing from Shelley's mind during this exceedingly productive year. At Leghorn, he completed "The Cenci," the story of which he had read in an old manuscript a year earlier. That he should have written within one year two dramas of such vital power as "Prometheus Unbound" and "The Cenci" is in itself a remarkable

achievement; that these two dramas should form so acute a contrast as they do is more remarkable still. For "The Cenci" is as impersonal as its companion is personal. The Shelleyan metaphysics and political dreams are utterly in abeyance; human characters, with violent passions and strong individualities, replace the gods and spirits of "Prometheus"; and dark deeds fill the scene instead of lyrical raptures and ecstatic prophecy. Beatrice Cenci, the heroine, is a magnificent character—no abstraction, but a moving figure thrilling with a warm life. At the opposite pole, her father, a study of absolute villainy, is limned in equally strong outline; and in the background of this splendidly contrasted pair is a group of minor characters—the weak Lucrezia sustained by the dominating grandeur of Beatrice; the crafty villain Orsino; the two brothers, Giacomo and Bernardo, somewhat unworthy of the honour of sharing the doom of Beatrice;—all developed in a real dramatic way; while still further in the background lurks the grim Pope, unseen, but swaying the drama like a ruthless Fate, the figure-head of a blind system of injustice. It is doubtful whether any greater tragedy has been written in English since "King Lear." The horrible story is saved from becoming sensational melodrama, just as "Hamlet" is, by the psychological sympathy with which the dramatist entered into the intense feelings of the actors. It is to be regretted on some grounds that Shelley did not further

cultivate the dramatic gift he displayed in "The Cenci"; but then—he died at thirty.

We must print a short extract from the last scene, but, like "Prometheus Unbound," "The Cenci" must be read whole. Beatrice, her stepmother Lucrezia, and Giacomo are doomed to death, and are awaiting the result of their final appeal to the Pope:

Giacomo. Know you not, Mother? . . . Sister, know you not?
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.
Lucrezia. Child, perhaps
It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years:
Oh, what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.
Beatrice. Yet both will soon be cold
Oh, trample out that thought! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope:
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp, and narrow hour
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring;
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free;
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. Oh, plead
With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man!
Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die:
Since such is the reward of innocent lives,
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.

And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep ; 'twere just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all embracing arms !
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now . . .

[Bernardo *rushes in.*]

Bernardo. Oh, horrible !
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain ! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one . . . What if 'twere fancy ?
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 'twere only rain. O life ! O world !
Cover me ! let me be no more ! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust ! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon . . .
Thee, light of life . . . dead, dark ! while I say, sister,
To hear I have no sister ; and thou, Mother,
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves . . .
Dead ! The sweet bond broken !

"The Cenci" had a better reception than most of Shelley's works, which was what Shelley himself anticipated. "Prometheus Unbound" was received with derision, and this again left Shelley calm. No poet was ever more just in

self-criticism than he, and time has confirmed the majority of his opinions, except those in which he had, with too much generosity or modesty, compared himself unfavourably with other poets, such as Byron or Keats. He could, looking at his work with a much severer ideal in front of him, afford to treat the opinions of his critics with the scorn that mere prejudice and ignorance deserved.

> Honey from silkworms who can gather ?
> Or silk from the yellow bee ?
> The grass may grow in winter weather
> As soon as Hate in me.

Thus he introduced a little poem about this time addressed to a critic. That he could hit harder when another was wronged he was soon to show in the scathing lines on the "carrion kites" in "Adonais." But at present he suffered much from the cold treatment of English people in Italy and from industrious slanderers who circulated false and injurious charges against him. At home, Leigh Hunt had become his generous champion and defended him in his "Examiner" against the venomous attacks of the "Quarterly"; but Hunt and his opinions were themselves suspect among the righteous, and his influence was not great enough to set Shelley right with the Philistines. In spite of everything, Shelley yearned often to go to England, and he followed the course of politics there with keen and sometimes excited interest.

The Peterloo massacre, in August 1819, stirred him to the heart, and in connection with it he wrote "The Masque of Anarchy," a forceful, but on the whole temperate, revolutionary manifesto. Shelley was not an advocate of violent measures; the cause of reform, he deemed, would be best served by education and by instilling the spirit of Liberty in the minds of the workers. Still, the poverty and degradation with which the artisan's lot seemed to be always associated, and the inertia with which a reactionary Government met all the pleas of the reformer, threw him into more revolutionary language. Thus:

Men of England, Heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty mother,
Hopes of her and one another,

Rise, like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew,
Which in sleep had fall'n on you:
Ye are many—they are few!

But Freedom must fight her battle with suitable weapons:

Science and Poetry and Thought
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not.

Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless,

Art thou ; let deeds, not words, express,
Thine exceeding loveliness.

* * * * *

Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute ;
With folded arms, and looks which are
Weapons of an unvanquished war.

* * * * *

Let the laws of your own land,
Good or ill, between ye stand,
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute.

Shelley, it must be repeated, was not a violent destroyer of good and humane institutions ; he valued liberty as the noblest of human passions, and any form of government that strangled liberty must either be reformed or purged away. He believed that England could be reformed and fitted for true liberty, that England's sons deserved and were capable of realising a better doom than was theirs. In his most effective "Song to the Men of England," he bids them

Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap ;
Find wealth,—let no impostor heap ;
Weave robes,—let not the idle wear ;
Forge arms in your defence to wear.

And in the incomplete and unpublished "Philosophical View of Reform" he advocated absolute freedom in the expression of opinion, equal laws and equal justice for all, abolition of tithes, repayment of the National Debt, and other similar reforms which, differ from them

as we may, are neither visionary nor absurdly unpractical. The emancipation of the masses from their economic and spiritual thraldom was the central object of Shelley's politics, and "The Masque of Anarchy" gives a vivid expression to his aspiration.

The tale of the year 1819 is still not ended. Shelley moved to Florence in the autumn, and there his last child, Percy Florence Shelley, was born. Mary was comforted by this event both at its occurrence and through her life, for the boy was destined to survive a delicate infancy, to outlive his parents and succeed to the baronetcy. Meanwhile Shelley rejoiced in the art treasures of Florence, as far as his health permitted; but a deep despondency was never long absent from his mind, though his spirit never lost its wings. If we dismiss "Peter Bell the Third" as a poem unworthy of him, if we merely mention his translation of Euripides' "Cyclops" as a piece of graceful verse, we have a suitable crown for this extraordinary year's work in the incomparable "Ode to the West Wind." It was "conceived and chiefly written," he notes, "in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which poured down the autumnal rains." Like two other exquisite lyrics of the coming year, "The Cloud" and "The Skylark," this ode makes the union between the poet's spirit and the forces of nature a perfectly

year. Many short lyrics we have not had time to mention or to count; and, to add to these, the stately "Ode to Liberty" and the almost equally solemn "Ode to Naples," inspired by the revolutionary outbursts in Spain and Naples, help to impress us with the abundance of the spiritual force which could triumph amid so many difficulties. Those vain bids for freedom filled Shelley with excited enthusiasm; but England offered him no such wine. There the case of the hapless Queen Caroline provided the goad for his unfortunate attempt at sarcastic satire, "Œdipus Tyrannus" or "Swellfoot the Tyrant." This was published in London, but only seven copies were sold before the booksellers withdrew it in order to avert a prosecution. Among so much work as the year 1820 produced, this alone was unworthy of the genius of Shelley; the rest is as remarkable for its variety as for its uniform excellence.

Shelley made numerous Italian acquaintances at Pisa, of a more or less agreeable type. One of these related to him the story of a beautiful young lady named Emilia Viviani. She had been confined in a convent near Pisa, and was kept there by her father to await a marriage which she abhorred. Inflamed by this tyrannous proceeding, Shelley was eager to be introduced to the lady; he found her, not merely exquisitely beautiful, but exceptionally intelligent; the result was a feverish platonic love, frequent visits—and the splendid poem, "Epipsychidion." Mary and Claire were no less attracted

by the unfortunate girl; they helped and cheered her in a number of ways, but hardly followed Shelley in his raptures. For his sympathy had soon ripened into worship. Emilia became the embodied spirit of his many dreams, the incarnate spirit of beauty which had eluded his quest for so long. Having at last found her, the ideal Love, he and Mary will take her to live alone with them in an "isle under Ionian skies," far from a world that cannot understand them. Though beautiful, the poem is difficult; it has found fewer admirers than most of Shelley's works; and it undoubtedly suffers from the unreality of the theme. Still, some of its scenic setting, and all its musical couplets, are splendidly poetical. Emilia, however, like Miss Hitchener in earlier years, turned out to be a quite ordinary woman. Shelley himself, writing to Leigh Hunt in June 1822, admits: "The 'Epipsychidion' I cannot look at; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno." And Mary, with blunter truth to Mrs. Gisborne, wrote: "Emilia has married Biondi; we hear that she leads him and his mother (to use a vulgarism) a devil of a life." Shelley, not long before his death, had arrived at the true criticism of himself when he wrote to Hunt: "I think one is always in love with something or other; the error . . . consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal." This seems to be the final criticism of Shelley's life. It was deluded by generous errors, but it was never embittered by his

discovery that his ideals were too remote from the life of the world. We add a few lines from "Epipsychidion," and then give a lyric which was a product of the same mood as inspired the love for Emilia :

EPIPSYCHIDION

It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,
And,—for the harbours are not safe and good,—
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited ; innocent and bold.
The blue Ægean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,
Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar ;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide :
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide ;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air ; and far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noonday nightingales ;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs ;
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,

And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep ;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.

TO ——

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it ;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow ?

Who that has known the " desire of the moth for the star," or the " devotion to something afar," can regret Shelley's error in identifying this universal emotion with Emilia or any other mortal object? The enthusiasm made a rich poetry for us, but the disappointment brought us an even richer music. These sad yearnings, these musings in the limitless tracts of the unattainable, are the key-tone of his most perfect poems. Now buoyant in the boundless

ether of desire, serene in invincible hope ; anon fluttering a bruised wing and pleading pathetically the truth of his lost ideal—that is the ebb and flow which sways the spirit of Shelley and intones his sweetest songs. One more melody we must select from the profuse outpouring of his life at Pisa, the sweet invocation to Night :

TO NIGHT

I

Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
Spirit of Night !
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight !

II

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought !
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day ;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought !

III

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee ;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

IV

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me ?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side ?
Wouldst thou me ?—And I replied,
No, not thee !

V

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled ;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, belovèd Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon !

Some time during the winter of 1820–1, and in the midst of his preoccupation with Emilia Viviani, Shelley wrote his prose "Defence of Poetry." It was suggested by an article in Ollier's "Literary Miscellany" by his friend Peacock, which cleverly treated the same theme. Shelley's "Defence" was not published till after his death, and is well worth study on its own intrinsic merits. It is an excellent, even distinguished, piece of lucid prose, and is of real value for its matter as well. It is a well-knit argument, expounding the poet's lofty ideal of his art and throwing much incidental light upon his own poetical method. Shelley conceived the two main objects of poetry to be : first, to create "new materials of knowledge

and power and pleasure" ; and secondly, to produce in the mind a desire "to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good." But these functions cannot be exercised at will, even by the greatest poet. A great poem is not produced by reason, by study, or by hard work—cannot arise from these alone. The great poet is he who can catch and record the "best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." He embodies in his verse the evanescent visitations of a divine nature which has come into his own ; he arrests, as it were, the noble moments of our existence, and makes all that is good and beautiful immortal. "Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man." Shelley will not, therefore, leave poetry to the mere artist, the dilettante, or the trifler ; "high seriousness" is an imperative preliminary to all poetry, and the maker of vain verses has no place in literature. There speaks through this "Defence" the poet, indeed, to whom poetry was the aureole of a true philosophy and a complete science, for whom the poetry which gives no help towards higher knowledge and higher insight is self-condemned ; it is a real disaster, not the least of those implied in Shelley's early death, that only one-third of this essay was completed. The critical remarks on the poetry of his own age are pregnant with wisdom and sound judgment. Shelley was an excellent critic, of himself and of others ; the

author of "Prometheus Unbound" was not likely to fall short in generous praise of any writing that made for a freer mind and a wider liberty. The "Defence of Poetry" should not, in short, be overlooked by any one who would know Shelley aright or is interested in the fundamentals of poetry.

The death of Keats, which took place in February 1821, set Shelley again to the composition of a long poem, the immortal elegy to Keats's memory entitled "Adonais." The two poets, linked in our minds by their untimely death and by the essential purity of their poetic genius, had really little else in common. They had met, but had not become acquaintances, partly because of the reserve and shyness of Keats, partly also because there was a real difference, other than that of social position, between them. Keats did not fall in with Shelley's political aims; he was a poet without ulterior motives, using his verse as the vehicle of beauty, and appealing to the æsthetic faculties rather than to the religious or intellectual. This did not repel Shelley, who was generous to a fault in his recognition of all good work. The following letter of invitation, written from Pisa on July 27, 1820, reveals Shelley in a pleasant light and shows his solicitude for the frail genius which was threatened with eclipse:

"I hear with great pain the dangerous accident you have undergone, and Mr. Gisborne, who gives me the account of it, adds that you

continue to wear a consumptive appearance. This consumption is particularly fond of people who write such good verses as you have done, and with the assistance of an English winter it can often indulge its selection. I do not think that young and amiable poets are bound to gratify its taste; they have entered into no bond with the Muses to that effect. But seriously (for I am joking on what I am very anxious about) I think you would do well to pass the winter in Italy, and avoid so tremendous an accident, and if you think it as necessary as I do, so long as you continue to find Pisa or its neighbourhood agreeable to you, Mrs. Shelley unites with myself in urging that you should take up your residence with us. You might come by sea to Leghorn (France is not worth seeing, and the sea is particularly good for weak lungs), which is within a few miles of us. You ought at all events to see Italy, and your health, which I suggest as a motive, may be an excuse for you. I spare declamation about the statues and paintings and ruins, and, what is a greater piece of forbearance, about the mountains and streams and fields, the colours of the sky, and the sky itself.

"I have lately read your 'Endymion' again, and even with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This people in general will not endure, and that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. I feel persuaded that you are capable

of the greatest things, so you but will. I always tell Ollier to send you copies of my books. 'Prometheus Unbound' I imagine you will receive nearly at the same time with this letter. 'The Cenci' I hope you have already received —it was studiously composed in a different style. 'Below the *good* how far; but far above the *great*.'

"In poetry I have sought to avoid system and mannerism. I wish those who excel me in genius would pursue the same plan. . . .

"P. B. SHELLEY"

This invitation was not accepted, but the friendly criticism of "Endymion" was acknowledged by a piece of valuable advice to Shelley: "You must curb your magnanimity and be more of an artist." The receipt of "Hyperion" and "Lamia" later in the year added to Shelley's anxious concern. "I intend to be the physician both of his body and his soul," he wrote to Leigh Hunt in November. But the visit was never paid; Keats came to Italy, and died at Rome without seeing Shelley.

When we say that "Adonais" is worthy of its subject, we have given it a very high eulogy; when we add that it is worthy to stand by the side of "Lycidas" as the greatest of English elegies, we have suggested a very severe test which it can endure without injury. Like Milton, Shelley had to mourn the loss of a friend in spirit and genius, rather than an intimate personal friend. Like Milton, Shelley was

inspired by Greek models; and, again like Milton, he transmuted the ancient pastoral form into a magnificent modern poem. And as the death of Lycidas led Milton up to the triumphant Puritanism which was the highest spiritual force of its time, so Shelley emerges from his sorrow into a pæan of immortality, the victory-song of Love, wherein Death is swallowed up in Life.

The high note on which the poem opens and closes, the sweetness of the beautiful Spenserian stanzas, is sustained without a faltering throughout the whole of "Adonais." It was supposed that the harsh criticisms of his poems had crushed Keats; and, when Shelley turns to lash with scathing force "the herded wolves," "the obscene ravens," "the carrion kites," a jarring seems to be felt. But it is only a momentary tremor, and is justified by the exceeding stupidity of the reviewers. Apart from this the poem is pure gold. Whether it is the invocation to Urania, or the procession of the Dreams, Hopes, Desires, which Adonais had made lovely, or the picture of his fellow-poets at the bier—the first half of the poem is felt to be most fitting and perfectly satisfying. But when we come to the magnificent peroration, we feel that Shelley has given us the highest and best that he has to give. And what this is, we must quote a few stanzas to show.

Among the mourners over Adonais, Shelley sees himself in the following pathetic guise:

ADONAIS

XXXI

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men ; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

XXXII

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked ;—a Power
Girt round with weakness ;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour ;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken ? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly : on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

XXXIII

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied and blue ;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it ; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart ;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

Having then turned aside to wield his flail against the critics, the poet breaks into the following splendid stanzas :

XXXIX

Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel ; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

XL

He has outsoared the shadow of our night ;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again ;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain ;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he ;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone ;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan !
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair !

XLII

He is made one with Nature : there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird ;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own ;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely : he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,
All new successions to the forms they wear ;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear ;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

But this is not enough : the soul of Adonais must retain its individual existence ; he lives among the " inheritors of unfulfilled renown " ; with those whose influence cannot die he rises " robed in dazzling immortality." " What Adonais is, why fear we to become ? " Death is the liberator of the soul, the key to all mystery, the spark that lights the fire of true life ; death makes us one with the great Spirit of the Universe, annihilates the work of time, only to clothe it with eternity.

LII

The One remains, the many change and pass ;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek !
Follow where all is fled !—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart ?
Thy hopes are gone before : from all things here
They have departed ; thou shouldst now depart !
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man, and woman ; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near :
'Tis Adonais calls ! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst ; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven,

Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given ;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven !
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar ;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Whatever words such a poet as this may have used to describe his beliefs, it is clear that he was in no just sense an atheist, and certainly not a materialist. Death is for him a trifling ripple on the great sea of Being ; but he will not confess to any dogmatic belief on the question of personal immortality. Yet, if we judge men in these lofty matters rather by their attitude towards them than by the formulæ in which they express themselves, we cannot hesitate about Shelley. No man ever preached the triumph of the spiritual over the material more eloquently than he. It is the undertone of all his poetry, and in "Adonais" it bursts forth into a mighty symphony which voices all the warrants of our immortality in everlasting music.

We must turn now from the friend who died unseen to those friends who did much to make the last two years of Shelley's life happy. We may mention his cousin Medwin, a rather meddlesome individual who has left us some imperfect recollections of the time. More congenial were Edward Elleker Williams and his wife, Jane. Williams was an army lieutenant on half-pay, slightly younger than

Shelley, many of whose ideas he shared, and even more his love of the water. But it was rather his wife who influenced Shelley most, and that by no intellectual tastes so much as by the charm and grace of manner which made her presence fill the air around her with sweetness. At the time, early in the spring of 1822, when Shelley was trying to work out an historical drama on Charles I. and was finding the impulse to poetry growing faint, the presence of Jane Williams kept the flame bright and pure. To her he wrote three beautiful lyrics—the best of them the lines with which he accompanied a guitar, his own gift. Williams and his wife are his Ferdinand and Miranda, and he is their guardian spirit, Ariel ; Jane is not a personified ideal, like Emilia Viviani, but the " dispenser of an exquisite felicity " ; and Shelley wrote his verses to her to express his pleasure in " her gentleness, her penetrating charity, her ineffable tenderness." He could not be her lover : he would be her troubadour.

These last details are obtained from the " Recollections " of Edward John Trelawny, a man of varied and wild experiences, who joined the Shelley party early in 1822. He has given us the best portrait we have of Shelley, as he was during the last months of his life : his description should be compared with that of Hogg. In regard to the lines " To Jane—with a Guitar," he has recorded how he came upon Shelley in a pine-forest, leaning against a log which overlooked a dark pool of water, and

surrounded by books and papers, as though he were in his study. It was under such circumstances that Shelley composed most of his shorter poems; they were hurried to paper in a blurred and almost indecipherable scrawl, as if the mind had been all too rapid for the fingers; and some of them were never copied again. The three poems to Jane were intended only for the lady and her husband; they express one of the happiest episodes of Shelley's life.

Another interesting personality who came for a short time into Shelley's circle was Prince Alexander Mavrocordato, who was (early in 1821) soon to become one of the leaders in the Greek bid for independence. Both Shelley and his wife liked the prince, who was full of literary enthusiasms, bright and learned, with a patriotic zeal for liberty. He and Mary exchanged lessons in Greek and English, and with Shelley he discussed English poetry or read the "Agamemnon." And when, later in 1821, the prince had gone to take part in the struggle, Shelley was inspired by the course of events to write and dedicate to him the lyrical drama, "Hellas."

This was suggested by the "Persæ" of Æschylus, but of course the fact that the struggle was still in suspense makes any comparison impossible, and "Hellas" became only one more of Shelley's pæans of liberty in her gigantic and perennial strife with despotism. The characters of the drama are shadowy, but they speak effectively, and the vision of the

tyrant sultan is moving and prophetic. But the issue is tragic ; the hopes with which the friends of freedom set out are dashed ; the Greeks are butchered, and victorious wrong lulls the despot's conscience. But out of the ashes a new Greece will assuredly arise, just as morning breaks at last upon dark dreams, or as heaven follows death. This is the thought that animates the whole poem. The lyrics sung by the chorus of captive Greek women express it in beautiful and often intricate lyric forms : it is admirably condensed in the song with which the drama ends :

HELLAS

FINAL CHORUS

The world's great age begins anew,
 The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
 Her winter weeds outworn :
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
 From waves serener far ;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
 Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
 Fraught with a later prize ;
Another Orpheus sings again,
 And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free:
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued:
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh, cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

The drama of "Hellas" suggests the noblest strain in the life of Byron also, whose life was closely interwoven with Shelley's at this point. Byron was living during 1821 at Ravenna with the Countess Guiccioli, and in August Shelley paid a visit to him there. The visit was clearly not a pleasant one. Apart from Byron's mode of life, apart from his cynical opinions and his

untrusty friendship, Shelley was oppressed by his callousness towards Claire and her child and discouraged by the easy cleverness with which he rattled off such fine verses as those in the fifth canto of "Don Juan." But Byron aroused Shelley's generous enthusiasm by a proposal that they two should join with Leigh Hunt in a periodical wherein each might freely publish his work. On the strength of this, Hunt later left England and arrived in Italy just in time to see Shelley before his untimely death; but the proposed periodical came to nothing owing to Byron's instability. Soon after Shelley's return to Pisa, Byron took up his residence there; and, though Shelley enjoyed discussions with his fellow-poet and was grateful in arousing as much of Byron's admiration as any one had done, his lordship's presence was a disturbing element in the simple life the Shelleys lived. At the end, Byron was felt to be what he was—an unreal and unreliable friend who had not hushed the breath of scandal, a fickle lover who delighted in humiliating the unhappy Claire, an inveterate poser in spite of good impulses and essentially noble blood. It was a relief when the Shelleys, with the Williamses and Trelawny, left Pisa in the spring of 1822, that Byron did not carry out his promise to accompany them.

Their destination in this their final move was Casa Magni, a romantic but primitive house at Lerici, on the gulf of Spezzia, a few miles above Pisa. There in a delightful solitude Shelley spent

his last weeks, and it is pleasant to know that, save for anxiety about Mary's health, they were supremely happy weeks. Trelawny had gone to Genoa to superintend the building of a new boat; and Claire, after learning of the death in a convent of her beloved Allegra, had gone to Florence. Thus Shelley could indulge his love for the water in the congenial company of Williams, and during the exquisite evenings listen to the guitar of Jane or read aloud from his favourite poets. In such genial environment he wrote in *terza rima* the magnificent fragment, "The Triumph of Life," with which his poetic life closes. The loss of the latter part of this poem is one of the great losses of literature. The splendour of the verses the no less than the solemnity and befitting a of their subject-matter, are eloquent witness to the sure ripening of the poet's gift; not Shelley nor any other poet has so filled us with the sense of the awe-inspiring mystery of life as "The Triumph of Life" gives it us; and the loss is felt to be incalculable when, having posed the dismal pageantry of the world in immortal stanzas, the poem is abruptly cut short on the query, "Then, what is Life?" A fit and worthy answer was entombed in the soul that was so soon to seek a worthier one in death: the tone of what we have assures us of this, and quickens our perception that grander possibilities still were swallowed up in the Gulf of Spezzia.

In May the new boat arrived, with Trelawny

and a young sailor named Vivian to man her. Her lightness and speed justified her title *Ariel*, but she was to prove an unseaworthy spirit. Yet Shelley and Williams obtained much delight in their different ways from her. Shelley had no fear, although he could not swim: indeed the sea fascinated him. One story will illustrate this, and there are several others. He had taken Jane Williams out with her children when, resting on his oars, he sat silent awhile, then suddenly exclaimed, "Now let us together solve the great mystery!" Jane managed to beguile him to the shore, and was glad enough to land, no doubt; but the mystery of death, with drowning as an easy solvent, was obviously ..al and familiar thought with Shelley.

..eigh Hunt arrived at Leghorn in July, and Shelley, with Williams and Vivian, sailed from Lerici to welcome him and to see him safely lodged in Byron's palace at Pisa. Shelley's presence was necessary, as events turned out; for Byron did not take kindly to his visitors—especially to Mrs. Hunt and her children. By the 7th, however, all was settled satisfactorily, and Shelley returned to Leghorn by post-chaise. On the following afternoon the *Ariel* started on her last journey.

For some days the weather had been exceptionally hot and dry; but at last the weather-wise detected signs of storm, and Trelawny, who was with Byron's yacht at Leghorn, sought to persuade Shelley against the journey back to Lerici; but common sense played but a

small part in the movements of Shelley—or in those of Williams either, when the sea was concerned; and with young Vivian for companion the two friends started. They were never seen alive again. A short but very violent thunderstorm broke over the bay; whether the *Ariel* was swamped or run down by some larger craft will never be known: certainly it perished.

Days of acute anxiety and gradually fading hope supervened. Trelawny searched by sea and land; even Byron shared the general solicitude. At last the bodies of Shelley and Williams were cast up by the sea, and Mary and Jane knew that they were widows indeed. Shelley's pockets contained a volume of Æschylus, and Keats's last poems: the latter, folded back at "The Eve of St. Agnes," would seem to have been his last companion. It is needless to tell, after Trelawny, how in the presence of Byron and Hunt the bodies were burnt on the seashore. The ashes of Shelley were buried near the grave of Keats in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, so beautifully described in "Adonais." On the tombstone, Leigh Hunt wrote a Latin inscription, which was followed by the words of Ariel in "The Tempest":

> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.

And surely the spirit that is celebrated there has, after many misunderstandings and much

tossing in the sea which it was unable to navigate, become transmuted into "something rich and strange"? We may feel that he died as he would have wished, on the bosom of the ineffable sea; we may acknowledge that Shelley's heart was not destined to beat into old age; we may, defying the ruthless Fates, boast the immortality of a spirit so pure and so beautiful, and return to its music as the spring of those young hopes that most ennoble us:—all these streams of reconcilement will not banish from us the cruel mystery of it all—the mystery so exquisitely sung in one of our poet's latest snatches of verse:

O World! O Life! O Time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—oh, never more!

VIII

IT is not easy to name in a few words even the salient elements of Shelley's greatness. He stands alone among English poets, as he stood alone in life. If we seek to pigeon-hole him with the label

of the romantic movement, we place him in the society of men who were utterly different from him. Wordsworth is calm, meditative, and essentially conservative; Coleridge and Keats are artists with a fine control of the artistic principle and the search for beauty; Byron is wanton and licentious in his freedom, without stimulus and without solace. None of these epithets touches Shelley. Yet he is at one with the other romantic poets in the determination to express his own individuality in the manner most suited to it. And it is precisely in the nature of this individuality that he stands so solitary in literature. He was an incongruous harmony, which the world could not understand, of noble aspirations and high personal character with social principles that would have been fatal, if universally applied, to the very virtues he most loved. The distinguishing note in him is *ideality*—the quality of raising every thought and action on to a higher plane, the imaginative faculty of taking into his mind the widest reaches and loftiest visions. Love will not rest upon one concrete object—it soars and fades away into eternity. The territory of Liberty he is impatient to make his own and all men's, but he cannot explore and occupy it piece by piece. Nature is not only flowers and streams, mountains and seas; but the movement of an eternal spirit. And in religion, wherein he has been most misunderstood, what he could not endure with patience was the imperfection and the incompleteness, the unworthy

littleness of what passed for Christianity; the attitude of his mind, as distinct from his intellectual beliefs, was not merely reverent; the roots of all religion were firm in it—true humility, unaffected love of his fellow-men, a noble ethics, an intense perception of the Infinite Love that dissolves all human perplexities. The effect of his poetry upon the mind is to keep awake our enthusiasms and our purest ideals, and this was what he most desired to do.

Using poetry thus as a vehicle of emotional appeal, Shelley could not be the accomplished artist that Keats was. He composed his verses under the stress of strong excitement, with his imagination inspired by thoughts and ideals which were often unmanageable in verse. Thus he is rarely wholly successful in long poems, which are like a crop of fruit gathered before it is wholly ripe. The structure of "The Revolt of Islam," even of "Prometheus Unbound," for example, is amorphous, running into vague mists, without clear design or, rather, without a successful accomplishment of the design. Yet he would be a bold critic who would deny the quality of artistic wholeness to "The Cenci" or "Adonais"; and we may even claim the very vagueness of "Prometheus" as an artistic merit. Whatever the value of this claim—and it is largely a matter of words, since no one will now confess himself to be unmoved by its supreme loveliness—all critics will be united in the opinion that the lyrics

show an art of the highest kind. They sing with final felicity some of the purest moods of man. Sad generally, they never strand us in the shoals of pessimism; pained at the "long heart-wasting show" around him, they disclose a bright and beautiful countenance amid their tears; despondent, as the spirits of all sensitive men must often be, they spring up again in a buoyant and inextinguishable hope. Turn to Palgrave's "Golden Treasury," and we see how high a place Shelley holds in lyric poetry. In drama he is only great in a relative sense; in narrative and satire he may be dismissed entirely; but in lyric he is among the greatest of the world, because of the purity at once of his melody and of its inspiration. Whatever art he brought to bear upon his poems—and he brought more than is often realised—he never allowed it to descend into artifice; he sang the truth as he saw it and felt it, with a sincerity quite unsurpassed; and when the chaff has been winnowed from the grain in his works, there remains an abundance of rich music of the most exquisite tone. For if Shelley could not look at mankind with the serenity of a Shakespeare, he gives us a most liberal compensation; out of much that was wild and immature came some of the most soaring poetry we have. He takes us indeed far from earth, but never into the abyss—always towards the light.

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